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THE GOSPELS AND THE GOSPEL





# THE GOSPELS AND THE GOSPEL

A STUDY IN THE MOST RECENT  
RESULTS OF THE LOWER AND  
THE HIGHER CRITICISM BY G. R. S.

MEAD, B.A., M.R.A.S.

"Press not the breasts of Holy Writ too hard, lest they yield  
blood rather than milk."—BISHOP ULRICH OF AUGSBURG.

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# THE GOSPELS AND THE GOSPEL.

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## PREAMBLE.

THIS small volume of short sketches is put forward with the very modest purpose of roughly chronicling a moment in the ever-changing fortunes of opinion occasioned by the persistent inroads of scientific research into the domain of theological traditions. The chronicling is neither that of a scientist, nor of a theologian, but of a friendly spectator, who, as a devoted lover of both Science and Religion, has no partisan interest to serve, and, as a believer in the blessings of that true tolerance which permits perfect liberty in all matters of opinion and belief, has no desire to dictate to others what their decision should be on any one of the many controversial points touched upon.

For the most part the writer is content to record the results of the researches and the expressions of opinion of others. When he ventures to put forward his own view, he is the



first to recognise that it also is equally an expression of opinion, although the nature of the subject may at times compel a phrasing which has all the appearance of voicing a very positive conviction. It is true that many of the results arrived at by critical research seem to the writer to belong to the same category of acquired facts of science as the now universally accepted truths of the revolution of the earth round its own axis and round the sun ; but the deductions drawn from these results with regard to the essentials of religion are at present still entirely in the domain of opinion, and must presumably remain there until we possess some common ground of knowledge, some normal basis of repeated experience, so to say, in the actual facts of general religion.

Even the most learned scientist or theologian knows really very little, when all is said and done, of these facts. So far, the warfare between them has resulted almost solely in the removal of errors of opinion and belief in matters of physical and historical fact ; so far, there has been little, if any, gain of positive knowledge in the domain of religion itself. But though our positive knowledge on scientific lines of the facts of religion may be said to have hardly begun, it would be a mark of littleness and conceit to grudge the expression of our highest

admiration for the unwearied patience, unflagging industry, and wonderful ability for research shown by the great scientists, scholars, and critics of Christendom ; and no matter how the opinions of many of them may still differ from our own on many points, it would be entirely unscientific, not to say impertinent, to raise any question even in thought as to their personal motives, or to doubt the sincerity of conviction of those who take part on either side in this unceasing warfare.

It is with their opinions we have to deal and not with the men themselves ; for so strange a compound is man, that one and the same individual may hold, at one and the same time, the most sublime views on some subjects, and the most absurd opinions on others ; and, stranger still, a man may be of irreproachable moral character (as morals are generally conceived by a generation which as yet is still strangely ignorant of the meaning of intellectual morality), and yet hold the most absurd views on religion ; or, again, he may live a life of license, and yet be correct in his opinions on many matters of the greatest importance in forming an enlightened view of religion. But in spite of these glaring contradictions, both experience of life and a knowledge of history force upon us the conviction that there is an inevitable will which is ever con-

straining the rational man towards a reconciliation of belief with knowledge, and which compels him to strive to be consistent with himself at any cost, if he would find peace. That this compulsion, moreover, is the best thing possible for him in the long run, is the persuasion of a philosophic mind, and that, too, even if in the process he finds himself compelled to abandon many of those things which he may have previously in ignorance considered as his greatest goods.

The following chapters have appeared month by month in a review which is devoted to the study of religion from an entirely independent standpoint, and the vast majority of whose readers have been long prepared to endeavour to consider such questions without trepidation or partisanship, no matter whether they belong to any one of the many churches of Christendom or to some particular school or sect of Brāhmanism or Buddhism, of Mohammedanism or Zoroastrianism, or whether, again, they follow no special form of religion. The professed object of all these students is to aid in breaking down the walls of separation between these sister world-faiths, in the firm confidence that such walls of separation have been erected solely by the ignorance of man, and form no part of the plans of the real builders of the fair originals, who (they firmly believe),



one and all, according to their capacity, laboured under the direct inspiration of the Master Architect of the essential religion of this planet.

Such readers required no general introduction to the subject to ensure a patient consideration of the immensely important problems of Gospel-criticism laid before them ; and even now, when these papers go forth in book-form to a wider public, the majority of my readers will still be of those who take an intelligent interest in the subject, and who will approach it without prejudice. They have the courage to think for themselves, and are, therefore, not to be deterred from reading a book because it bears the name of a Society whose intentions and labours have, for the past quarter of a century, been for the most part as greatly misunderstood as the work of all pioneers the world over in every advance towards a better understanding of the nature of things.

It should, however, be stated that the imprint of the Theosophical Publishing Society (*not* of the Theosophical Society) means nothing but that the book is published by that entirely unofficial body. It is not an *imprimatur*, but purely a trade indication. No book that has ever been brought out by any member of the Theosophical Society through any publisher whatever, or by any non-member of the Society through any one of the publishing firms which

take the name "Theosophical," has ever been officially endorsed by the Society itself, or can ever be so endorsed. Such books are individual expressions of opinion, and the views of the authors are no more necessarily accepted by the members of the Society than are, for instance, the opinions of writers of books published by the S. P. C. K. endorsed by the conscience of a united Christendom.

Every one in the Society demands the liberty to think and judge for himself according to the evidence and his own experience of life, and this the constitution of the Society guarantees to every member in the fullest possible way. Whatever views, then, the writer may put forward in these papers, they are his own private opinions, and involve none of his colleagues. For the most part, however, these sketches are historical; they deal with the evolution and present position of the science of biblical criticism, in its application chiefly to what, from a dogmatic standpoint, are immeasurably the most important documents in the whole Bible literature, namely, the four canonical Gospels.

Doubtless, as has been said before, the majority of my readers are already prepared for a calm consideration of this subject without fear or prejudice. They are already acquainted with the general results of biblical criticism as applied

to the Old Covenant documents, and are anxious to hear how it stands with the New Testament literature; or they know more or less the general position of affairs with regard to the New Covenant books as well, and wish to be better informed of the most recent researches and results in Gospel-criticism. But there may be others, less acquainted with such matters, to whom the perusal of this little volume, should it by chance fall into their hands, would come as a veritable shock. I have therefore thought it better to introduce the subject by a very brief and rough sketch of the general history of the evolution of biblical criticism as a whole, a chapter which can easily be omitted by the better informed reader.

Perhaps the most useful work to which to refer the general reader for an all-round view on this subject is Dr. Andrew Dickson White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, the two volumes of which have just appeared in a second edition (1901). This work now practically supersedes Dr. Draper's famous *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, which appeared upwards of a quarter of a century ago and ran through no less than twenty editions in the first ten years of its existence. The advance shown by the later over the earlier work, not only in

the naturally expanded and far more detailed treatment of the subject, but also in the more judicial spirit and impartial point of view of the historian, cannot be better indicated than by the improved wording of Dr. White's title. The conflict is now recognised to have been with Theology and not with Religion; and it might even be suggested that a still more correct title might be found in the consideration, that this warfare has throughout been waged almost exclusively between the progressive knowledge of physical facts (natural, historical, and literary) and the conservatism of theological traditional views, and never at any time really between Science and Religion in their true meanings.

To this book the general reader, who has not the ability and patience to grapple with the more special and technical works on "Introduction," may turn for further information, and we may also use it ourselves, as well as any other, to recall to memory the general historical data with which we are concerned in the following rough outline.

## A GLIMPSE AT THE HISTORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

As early as the middle of the twelfth century Aben Ezra, the most learned biblical scholar of his day, ventured to hint in enigmatic fashion that the whole of the Pentateuch could not possibly have been written by Moses. To avoid martyrdom, however, he put the responsibility of conceiving such an heretical idea on the shoulders of a Rabbi of a past generation, and discreetly added the caution: "Let him who understands keep silence."

This counsel of expediency was faithfully followed by the learned world for nigh upon four centuries, when Carlstadt, a Protestant, ventured to assert that the authorship of the Pentateuch was unknown and unknowable; he was speedily suppressed amid universal applause. At the same time Andreas Maes, a Catholic, suggested that the Five Books had been edited by Ezra; Maes' work was promptly placed on the Index.



Meantime great successes had been won in fields of literary research closely bordering on that of canonical Scripture. It had been proved that the famous Isidorian Decretals, the main prop of Papal pretensions, were pious forgeries; that the writings circulated in the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, which for a thousand years had been regarded as the most precious documents supplementary to Holy Writ, were centuries later in date than the epoch assigned to them by tradition, and could not possibly have been written by the supposed disciple of Paul; further, that the supposed letter of Christ to Abgarus was utterly unauthentic—a letter which is still held to desperately by the unprogressive Armenian Church as its most precious possession, and which for some strange reason is at the present moment being circulated widely as a leaflet by some ignorant people in the very progressive United States! Encouraged by these successes, men began more boldly to apply the same method of research to the canonical books. Hobbes published his *Leviathan* and La Peyrère his *Preadamites*; the former was put under the ban, the latter cast into prison.

In 1670 Baruch Spinoza, the famous Jewish philosopher and scholar, and a man of most saintly life, published his epoch-making work *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. In this he argued that

the Pentateuch, as we have it, must have been written long after the time of Moses, though Moses may have composed some of its original sources, such as the Book of the Wars of God and the Book of the Covenant; that the repetitions and contradictions in it showed a great variety of sources as well as very careless revision and editing; in brief, that the books of the Old Testament had in the main grown up as a literature, and that though these were to be regarded as *containing* divine revelation, the old claim for inerrancy in all their parts must be abandoned; that while the prophets were to be held to be inspired, the prophetic gift was not to be considered the exclusive privilege of the Jewish people.

But though the writings of Spinoza breathed a most deeply religious spirit, so that even Novalis called him a "God-intoxicated man," this pioneer of truth was publicly cursed by his synagogue, while the Christian world regarded him as the forerunner of Anti-Christ; and even as late as 1880, when it was proposed to set up his statue in Amsterdam, from synagogue and pulpit were poured forth denunciations of the wrath of heaven upon the city for permitting such profanation. But Spinoza's labours, though howled down by the many, bore good fruit in the minds of the chosen few, and beyond all others

Lessing in Germany helped to spread the light in his famous treatise on the Education of the Human Race and in his drama Nathan the Wise.

In France Robert Stephens had already pointed out no less than 2000 various readings in the MS. copies of the Old Testament, and Capellus in his *Critica Sacra* had proved not only that the vowel-pointing of Hebrew, which was held to have been divinely inspired from the beginning, was a late device, but that the text from which the translations were made was full of the grossest of errors, and that there clearly could not possibly have been any miraculous preservation of the original autographs of the sacred books.

In 1678 Richard Simon, a priest of the Oratory, brought out his *Critical History* of the Old Testament on the same lines, and showed that Hebrew could not possibly have been the primitive language of mankind. His work would now pass as entirely conservative and orthodox, but Bossuet, the famous Bishop of Meaux, impetuously broke forth against him. Simon's work was publicly destroyed, and Bossuet did not rest till he had driven him from the Oratory. Simon, however, courageously continued his labours.

Of other scholars of the time, labouring in the

same field, the most bitter theological storm raged against Le Clerc, who, driven out of Geneva, sought refuge in Amsterdam. He anticipated still further some of the now generally accepted facts of scientific interpretation; but Le Clerc's most valuable contribution to the clear thinking of posterity was his famous answer to those who, in defending the traditional view of the authorship of the Pentateuch, quoted as the inerrant decision of the truth itself the references of Jesus and the Apostles to Moses in the New Testament literature. To this he bravely replied: "Our Lord and His Apostles did not come into the world to teach criticism to the Jews, and hence spoke according to the common opinion." But the storm raised against Le Clerc was so overwhelming that he was compelled in utter amazement to falter out some kind of recantation, the usual fate in a theological environment (or a scientific one for that matter) of one who voices a great truth before its time.

It was not, however, till 1753 that the first definitely acquired results in what the Germans call *Quellenlehre* were obtained, when the orthodox Catholic Astruc, a doctor of medicine and not a professional theologian, published his *Conjectures on the Original Memoirs which Moses used in composing the Book of Genesis*.

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Astruc was indeed defending the Mosaic authorship against the view of Spinoza, and in this he was entirely on the side of the traditionalists, and is no longer supported by even the most extreme conservatives of present-day scholarship; but in so doing he demonstrated what is now held by all schools of criticism to be a definitely acquired fact of science. He showed that in Genesis there are at least two main narratives distinguished in Hebrew by the use of different names for God, Elohim and Yahweh (Jehovah); that each narrative has distinct characteristics of its own in thought and expression, and that when separated out each is consistent with itself, while as they stand in the text, as parts of a single narrative, they are utterly inconsistent.

Astruc was most bitterly denounced and sneered at as an ignoramus by all the theological Faculties of the time, of every shade of belief; and it is a most instructive fact to notice, how that it required the trained mind of a scientific thinker to detect what had for two thousand years escaped the notice of numberless minds of equal capacity but trained in theological methods.

It is also interesting to remark that it was Eichhorn, the pupil of the great theologian Michaelis (the very foremost in pouring con-

tempt on Astruc's discovery), who was chiefly instrumental in bringing this truth before the world. Eichhorn and others developed the theory that not only Genesis and the Pentateuch in general, but also numerous other books of the Old Testament as well, are made up of fragments of old writings mainly disjointed; that indeed the Bible is not a book, or even a collection of books, but for the most part a library of literary fragments, edited and re-edited, in fact a whole literature in itself; moreover, that the style of it is not unique, but the general Oriental style of similar writings of the lands and times in which the various parts of it were written; and that the same methods of criticism are to be applied to it as to these non-biblical writings. They are all to be studied by the light of the modes of thought and styles of statement, and by the literary habits generally which are known to have existed among Oriental peoples. From Eichhorn's time such research has been generally known as the "higher criticism." Eichhorn's one desire was to bring back the educated classes to the Church, in a period when encyclopædism was triumphant on the Continent and traditionalism was repelling all thinking minds by its obstinacy. An attempt to translate his book into English, however, was bitterly opposed; nevertheless, the tide of the new



thought was steadily rising, and the chairs of no theological Canutes could now stay its natural course.

At the end of the eighteenth century Herder published his brilliant contribution to biblical research, and in his *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* showed that the Psalms were by different authors and of different periods, in brief, selections from a great poetic literature. He also endeavoured to prove that the Song of Songs, which had for two thousand years exhausted the ingenuity of theologic and mystic interpretation of both Jew and Christian, was simply an Oriental love poem.

In 1800 Alexander Geddes, a Roman Catholic and a Scotsman, published a volume of critical remarks in connection with his translation of the Old Testament. In spite of his universally acknowledged great scholarship, and although to-day his main conclusions are the elementary commonplaces of accepted biblical science in all Protestant theological schools, Geddes was not only suspended by the Roman Catholic authorities, but also furiously denounced by all shades of Protestantism, and in general sneered at by all as "a would-be corrector of the Holy Ghost."

But though upwards of half a century was still to elapse before any noticeable impression was to be made even on intelligent public

opinion in Great Britain and the United States, and though the official theological Faculties even of Germany and Holland were still bitterly opposed to any innovations, nevertheless with the opening of the nineteenth century the science of biblical criticism had in the latter countries already vindicated its right to existence in the world of real thought and learning, though still only so far as the Old Testament was concerned. A long and bitter struggle still lay before it during the coming century ere it won its way in other Protestant countries, and gradually vindicated its right of existence in every centre of theological study, and that, too, almost as freely in the domain of the New Testament as in that of the Old.

To follow out this struggle in detail would be a task so gigantic, that I doubt whether any historian could single-handed accomplish it fully. The past century, especially the last fifty years, has been so wonderfully prolific in works on the subject, that a bare bibliography alone would require a huge volume. When we contemplate this vast monument of industry, when we gaze at the titles of the volumes of this enormous library, it would at first sight seem almost incredible that there should be a single child in an elementary school who had not heard something of the matter. Indeed it is a striking

sign of the times that four years ago a book appeared boldly advocating the teaching of the facts of the higher criticism to children. This remarkable book—*The Bible and the Child: The Higher Criticism and the Teaching of the Young* (London: 1897)—was written by eight doctors of divinity and professors of biblical history, among the four doctors of divinity being two deans of the Established Church in this country.

But history teaches us that general evolution is very, very slow indeed, and the student of the recorded past experience of the world in similar matters is not surprised to find, even at this late hour and in Protestant countries (if perhaps we except parts of Germany, Switzerland, and Holland), how little even the fairly intelligent masses of the people are acquainted with the results of this all-important science, while in the countries subjected to the Roman and Eastern Churches not only are the people kept in complete ignorance of the whole matter, but the learned of the Roman Catholic communion, both clerics and laymen, labour under the enormous disability of authoritative restrictions, which practically still compel them to use all their abilities for the defence of traditionalism, on peril of falling under the ban.

But among the thinking classes in the lands which have accepted the principle of religious

freedom, how great a change has been wrought in a short hundred years! To-day, in so-called Protestant lands, even the most conservative scholars of biblical scholarship accept unquestioningly not only the general principles of criticism, but also all those fundamental positions for holding which men were persecuted, degraded, and reviled a century ago. It is no longer a question of the intelligent layman accepting the conclusions of some isolated specialist; the enquiring reader is confronted, not only in all preliminaries by the crushing authority of a consensus of opinion of hundreds and hundreds of scholars who have made a special study of the subject, but also on a number of more special points by an ever-growing body of opinion. Thus, at this late date, no scholar hesitates to recognise the large part played by myth and legend in the evolution of Hebrew sacred literature; the traditional authorship of many of the documents has been definitely abandoned, and the important part played by compilation and revision is recognised as a basic principle of criticism. The modern biblical scholar is not distressed, for instance, to find that Deuteronomy is in the main a late priestly summary of the law, and Chronicles a late priestly summary of early history and tradition. Yet only a hundred years ago De Wette for putting forward such

ideas in a far more moderate form was driven out of Germany, and Theodore Parker, almost half a century afterwards, for publishing a translation of De Wette's book in the United States, was rejected even by the Unitarians.

It is not, however, the change brought about in unlearned public opinion (which must of course be a very slow process), nor yet the far more rapid change effected in the more enlightened opinions of independent thinkers, which marks for the historian the surrenders of theology; his task is rather to trace the gradual acceptance of the principles of the new method by the official teaching bodies in the great centres of vested interests. Even in Germany, which to its lasting credit took the lead in bowing to the inevitable, the spirit of intolerance died hard among the reactionary doctors. One would have thought that the discovery of Astruc should, after the lapse of a hundred years, have familiarised them with the idea of "sources" for Genesis; nevertheless in 1853, when Hupfeld clearly demonstrated the existence of yet another source in addition to Astruc's Elohistie and Jehovistic documents, he was bitterly persecuted by the irreconcilables. But the times had changed, a more tolerant spirit was abroad, and to its enduring honour the theological Faculty of the

University of Halle, although it was headed by men who were on the conservative side, protested against this persecution.

In the next decade more and more brilliant light was thrown on the old documents, and, among many other discoveries of importance, it was gradually forced upon the convictions of the thinking world in Germany, by the work of such men as Graf, Kayser and Kuenen, that the complete Levitical law could not possibly have been established at the beginning, but owed its development to a period when the heroes and prophets had been succeeded by the priests; that is to say, when the Jews had ceased to exist as an independent political body—in brief, that it belongs mostly to the post-exilic period. In 1869 Kuenen, in his *Religion of Israel*, gave an enormous impulse to such researches, and attracted far and wide the attention of the thinking world. He argued that the truly historical point of departure in the tradition of Jewish literature was to be found in the utterances of the prophets of the eighth century, and that research should be pushed backwards and forwards from this period. He further showed with admirable scholarship and convincing reasoning, “that Old Testament history in general is largely mingled with myth and legend; that not only were the laws attributed



to Moses in the main a far later development, but that much of their historical setting was an afterthought; also that Old Testament prophecy was never supernaturally predictive of events recorded in the New Testament."

"Thus," concludes Dr. White, in his chapter on the Beginnings of Scientific Interpretation, "was established the science of biblical criticism. And now the question was, whether the Church of Northern Germany would accept this great gift—the fruit of centuries of devoted toil and self-sacrifice—and take the lead of Christendom in and by it."

Dr. White is of opinion that in Germany the official mind of the Church did so definitely accept it in the person of Wellhausen. It is of course very difficult to assure ourselves of very definite decisions when so many complicated interests are involved, or to detect with accuracy the precise turning-points in this great conflict of opinion and evolution of thought—there are so many overlappings; but the fact that Wellhausen is still the special *bête noire* of the most popular conservative propagandist bodies of this country, such as the S. P. C. K., while not only the present advanced school but also most of the moderates recognise his specially great services to criticism, seem clearly to point to his great influence in the controversy. Dr. White's sym-

pathies are plainly always with the advanced school, and he chronicles the victory of its representative at that time in Germany in the following paragraph :

“The great curse of Theology and Ecclesiasticism has always been the tendency to sacrifice large interests to small—Charity to Creed, Unity to Uniformity, Fact to Tradition, Ethics to Dogma. And now there were symptoms throughout the governing bodies of the Reformed Churches indicating a determination to sacrifice leadership in this new thought to ease in orthodoxy. Every revelation of new knowledge encountered outcry, opposition, and repression; and, what was worse, the ill-judged declarations of some unwise workers in the critical field were seized upon and used to discredit all fruitful research. Fortunately, a man now appeared who both met all this opposition successfully, and put aside all the half truths or specious untruths urged by minor critics whose zeal outran their discretion. This was a great constructive scholar—not a destroyer, but a builder—Wellhausen. Reverently, but honestly and courageously, with clearness, fulness, and convincing force, he summed up the conquests of scientific criticism as bearing on Hebrew history and literature. These conquests had reduced the

vast structures which theologians had during ages been erecting over the sacred text to shapeless ruin and rubbish: this rubbish he removed, and brought out from beneath it the reality. He showed Jewish history as an evolution obedient to laws at work in all ages, and Jewish literature as a growth out of individual, tribal, and national life. Thus was our sacred history and literature given a beauty and high use which had long been foreign to them. Thereby was a vast service rendered immediately to Germany, and eventually to all mankind; and this service was greatest of all in the domain of religion."

The succeeding generation of scholars of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches of Germany, Switzerland, and Holland has numbered hundreds and hundreds of specialists devoted to biblical research on scientific lines in all its branches, and to-day no one can hold a chair of theology in any Protestant university on the Continent who is not grounded in critical science; were he ignorant of it he would stand no chance of election, or if by any strange chance he were elected, he would find no pupils in his class room.

In the free seats of learning of Northern Germany, Switzerland, and Holland, then, the victory had now been practically won by Well-

hausen, and "liberty of teaching" had been assured to the Continental professors of biblical research in the Universities. Meantime in England the barriers against the inroads of Continental biblical criticism, the bitterly detested so-called "German theology," had till a decade beyond the middle of the nineteenth century been kept practically intact, not only by the strong conservative force of custom and the tenacity of orthodox traditionalism, but also by the extraordinary national obstinacy in things religious which only began to develop its scholarship for the professed purpose of combatting the German school with its own weapons. The traditional theological position was to all appearances impregably entrenched behind the bishops' thrones, the stalls of the cathedrals, the chairs of theology at the great universities, and the country parsonages; when, in 1860, there appeared a small volume, with the modest and uncontroversial title *Essays and Reviews*, the work of seven brave scholars, who with great moderation pointed out that many of the old positions were rendered untenable by the results of recent research.

The seven courageous essayists were instantly overwhelmed with a storm of abuse, and a wild hurly-burly ensued. Two of the writers were prosecuted and suspended from their offices.

They appealed to the Queen in Council, and the final decision of the Court declared that it was no part of its duty to pronounce any opinion on the book. A special cause of grievance was that the doctrine of eternal hell had been unfavourably criticised by one of the writers. A wit of the period accordingly summed up the judgment as "Hell dismissed with costs." The questionable measures employed in the attempt to secure a condemnation of the book, and the enormous publicity given to the controversy by the press, began that healthy education of the public mind which has ever since been steadily improved, and from that moment the ramparts of English theological exclusiveness and obstinacy began slowly to crumble away. When we reflect that Dr. Temple was one of the essayists in the famous volume which raised this so violent storm of theological bitterness, and that this same Dr. Temple was a few years ago made Archbishop of Canterbury, and so promoted to the highest office in the Established Church of England, and that, too, without outcry, we may understand a little how enormously things have changed for the better, and how well the public mind has been educated during the last forty years. It was Dr. Temple who said: "What can be a grosser superstition than the theory of literal inspiration? But because that has a regular

footing it is to be treated as a good man's mistake, while the courage to speak the truth about the first chapter of Genesis is a wanton piece of wickedness."

But the storm stirred up by Essays and Reviews was as nothing to the tempest roused by Bishop Colenso's famous work on the Pentateuch and Joshua which was published in 1862. The bishop's statements, which nowadays all seem so moderate, brought down a veritable tornado of denunciation on his devoted head. His mathematical arguments that an army of 600,000 men could not very well have been mobilized in a single night, that three millions of people with their flocks and herds could not very well have all drawn water from a single well, and hundreds of other equally ludicrous inaccuracies of a similar nature, were popular points which even the most unlearned could appreciate, and therefore especially roused the ire of the apologists and conservatives. Colenso was overwhelmed with execration by all parties of Conformity and Nonconformity, and he was finally excommunicated with contumely. As in the case of the condemned essayists, so now the bishop appealed from the prejudice of the Ecclesiastical Courts to the Courts of Justice; they worthily vindicated their name and he was acquitted. Enraged by this decision his theo-



logical opponents attacked him still more bitterly, and sought by every means to ruin his reputation. But such pitiless treatment in due course brought about the natural reaction, and a new generation of English, Scotch, and American scholars has amply justified his main contentions, proving in a new sense the truth of the old saying: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

It would take too long to follow out in roughest outline the gradual carrying by assault of even the seemingly most impregnable fortresses established for the special purpose of upholding traditional views at all costs. In 1889 *Lux Mundi* practically marked the capitulation of the Keble College stronghold and all it stood for as a thing apart, and in 1893 Sanday's lectures on Inspiration, in which among other things he so to speak officially abandoned the authenticity of the Book of Daniel, and with it practically all the traditional predictive position, surrendered the Oxford Bampton lectureship to the victorious forces of scientific research.

The advance on the strongholds of the Nonconforming and Free Churches kept pace with the victories in the Established Church, and in some cases outstripped them. Davidson, professor of the Congregational College at Man-

chester, won the first battle among Dissenting Churchmen as early as 1862 in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*; and Robertson Smith, driven out of the Free Church of Scotland by his brilliant contributions to biblical research, was honourably welcomed to a professorship at Cambridge, and in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (a publication which is, however, now for the most part out of date) popularised the more general results of scientific research in the field of Old Testament criticism.

In America similar victories have been won in every seat of theological learning by such men as Toy, Briggs, Francis Brown, Evans, Preserved Smith, Moore, Haupt, Harper, Peters and Bacon. Assyriological and Egyptological research, and the vast mass of material for comparative religion given to the world by the translation of the Sacred Books of the East, have thrown and are still throwing ever more and more light on the development of the Jewish and Christian faiths, and to-day we have reached the position that now in Great Britain and the United States, as years before us on the Continent, no professor in any of the theological schools can venture to reject the more general results of the researches of the higher criticism; were he to do so, his class room would be empty.

Those who desire to read a lucid summary of

the "Achievements of the [Past] Century" in the enormously important domain of comparative religion may be referred to the four admirable articles of Dr. Estlin Carpenter in *The Enquirer* (May 19, 26, June 2, 9, 1900).

But what has been so far written applies mainly to Old Testament criticism. On this field the battle has been decisively won as far as Protestantism is concerned. We do not mean to suggest that there are not many problems and countless details on which there is still the greatest difference of opinion even among specialists; but we do assert, without fear of contradiction by any well informed reader, that the general principles of Old Testament criticism are now accepted by every professor of Bible history, including the most conservative scholars; the general traditional view survives now solely among the unlearned. There is to-day not one single scholar in Protestant Christendom who would dream of endorsing the proclamation of the late Dean Burgon, the greatest stalwart of traditionalism in the last generation. To his dying day the learned Dean held doggedly to his statement before a congregation of scholars and students at Oxford in 1861, when he declared:

"No, sirs, the Bible is the very utterance of the Eternal: as much God's own word as if high

heaven were open and we heard God speaking to us with a human voice. Every book is inspired alike, and is inspired entirely. Inspiration is not a difference of degree, but of kind. The Bible is filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit of God : the books of it and the words of it and the very letters of it."

Such mediæval declarations are no longer possible for Protestantism in the twentieth century ; they are now abandoned to the official diplomacy of the Roman Church, which, by the mouth of its Sovereign Pontiff, as late as 1893 unblushingly reaffirmed the traditional dogma of plenary inspiration. The Pope in his encyclical of that date still felt himself compelled to play his traditional *rôle* in what every intelligent onlooker must now know to be a solemn farce. He squarely reasserted for the benefit of that mediævalism which persists into the twentieth century, that there can be no error of any sort in the sacred books. In the face of such unreason the intelligent among the Roman faithful are bound to argue that an encyclical is not officially binding upon the conscience ; that it is to be taken simply as a piece of fatherly advice, but by no means as an inerrant decree. Not only so, but casuists, like a late distinguished Jesuit Father in the *Contemporary Review*, can manage so to twist the words of the Holy Father, that they

can even be made to appear as though they permitted the free acceptance of the general results of the higher criticism ! But it is a sad sight to see men of such undoubted ability forced by devotion to their hereditary diplomacy, to such devious apologetics and such sinuous interpretations of the pronouncement of their Pope and King. So far the Roman communion remains officially in its mediævalism ; to escape censure, its scholars must resort to casuistry, and casuists can never be true scientists. With such a millstone round their necks it is indeed wonderful that some of them have nevertheless accomplished so much in the field of biblical research. The battle, however, has still to be won officially in the most reactionary of Western Churches ; but it is very certain that, even if no more direct means can be found, it is only the question of a few years before ingenuity, while fully guarding the dignity of a supposed inerant tradition, will find some way out for the statement of the truth.

What has been so far stated, then, applies for the most part to the Old Covenant documents. Even when considerable headway had been made with Old Testament criticism, few dared to question in the same way the books of the New Testament. But once the main principles of criticism had been laid down and men's minds had

been trained in the practical details of research, it was inevitable that the same methods eventually should be applied to the New Covenant documents. The opposition offered by the conservative power of traditionalism in this field has been ten times as great as in the domain of purely Jewish scripture. And even to-day we find men of very advanced views in Old Testament research hesitating before the most moderate positions in New Testament criticism. All this is natural enough and easily understood. But the wheel of biblical criticism once set going, nothing could stop it. It now grinds on relentlessly; no man, no school, no church, can hold it back. The nature of this research is such that for a man's work to stand, he must be honest. Research has now been pushed into the most out-of-the-way regions, into the very by-paths of history and palæography. The most unexpected witnesses are being disinterred to confirm the brilliant conjectures of scholarship, and the truth about the documents of the New Testament collection is being as clearly established as are the facts about the Hebrew books.

As the main results with regard to the text of the New Testament in general, and with regard to the four Gospels in particular, will be laid before the reader, it is unnecessary to indicate the main moments of interest in the history of



the evolution of New Testament criticism. It is enough to say that, as far as the general mass of scholars is concerned, New Testament research has kept till lately well behind Old Testament criticism. In the former field conservatism has been far more slowly broken down in spite of a century of devoted labours. The fortunes of the fray, however, have followed somewhat the same lines in the different countries in both domains : Germany has led the way, and England has held back and tried to check advanced views. England has always, broadly speaking, represented the conservative interest in biblical affairs. And it is just because of this natural leaning to conservatism by the mass of English scholars, that the publication of the very advanced biblical encyclopædia to which we shall have to refer so often in the succeeding pages, marks a distinct turning-point in the fortunes of the warfare between science and theology in this country.

There now exists a powerful and influential school of New Testament criticism which in the person of its most advanced adherents has the hardihood to follow out its researches to their logical conclusions. To present the results of this school to the unaccustomed reader without some sort of introduction would have been a too severe shock. A brief introductory chapter,

then, has been penned for the few who may take up this book without any previous intelligent acquaintance with the results of the higher criticism. Such a hasty glimpse at so vast a subject must necessarily be vague and hazy; but the points we are to deal with in the following chapters will be far more definite, and the facts when once read will not be easily erased from the memory. The reader who feels already seriously disturbed by the perusal of this introduction, and who fears to plunge deeper into the free waters of criticism, is strongly advised to leave the matter alone and content himself with the creeds and cults of the Churches. What follows is written without fear and without favour. To-day the whole dogmatic basis of the Christian faith (in any way in which it has been previously understood) is practically called into question by the most advanced wing of criticism, and in the following pages the main results of their labours will be set forth unflinchingly. It is true that the writer personally does not agree with the ultra-rationalism of this extreme school; he nevertheless feels himself compelled largely to accept the proofs brought forward of the unhistorical nature of much in the Gospel narratives, and also the main positions in all subjects of Gospel-criticism which do not involve a mystical or practical religious element.

## THE "WORD OF GOD" AND THE "LOWER CRITICISM."

IN the whole field of the comparative science of religion there is perhaps no more interesting and instructive phenomenon than the worship of books. From the earliest times of which we have any record, we hear of books which were regarded with the utmost awe and reverence, not only as containing "all things necessary to the salvation" of the race and the adherents of the faith, but also as in themselves instruments of power committed to the priesthood by superior beings, books of magical efficacy, containing the means of binding and loosing on earth, in heaven, and in the under-world, books sacrosanct and jealously guarded, treasures of those magic "words of power" which conferred authority and wisdom on the fortunate possessor.

It would be too long in this short sketch to trace the evolution of religion out of this magical phase, through the mixed period of superstition

and nascent self-development and independent enquiry, up to the present state of affairs, in which the militant intellect of our time gazes with contempt on the graves of the idols of the ancient gods whom it fancies its fathers have slain, while it challenges every modern god to come forth, if he would battle for the creeds of his worshippers.

It is, however, an astonishing fact that in spite of this great intellectual development—a development which has advanced our humanity to puberty, if not to manhood—the vast majority of mankind still clings to its ancient belief in what is practically the magical efficacy of its sacred books. Millions even of those who in every other respect reject the vulgar idea of magic with contempt, are still persuaded that their sacred deposit—Shruti, Bible or Korān—is inspired, not only in its content, but also in its letter; that indeed it is an inerrant instrument of infallible truth. This substitution of books for truth, of formulæ for direct knowledge, is a most interesting phenomenon which requires an elucidation at present beyond the power of a science which is still in the strife of battle against the conservatism of an ignorant past. Such an elucidation pertains to the science of a more peaceful future, when the nature of “inspiration” will be better understood, and mankind as a whole will have

learnt the elementary lesson that the absolute is not to be confounded with the relative, that perfection cannot be manifested by means of imperfection, that infallibility is not within the possibility even of the purified human mind, much less is it capable of expression in the coarse material of written documents or printed works.

But our present study is not concerned with the general question of inspiration and an enquiry into its nature as exemplified by the heterogeneous contents of the world-bibles; the subject before us, vast as it is, is one of far less compass, though one of enormous importance in the consequences which flow from its investigation. Our subject is the textual criticism of the New Testament generally and of the Gospels in particular. This collection of books, considered by the whole of Christendom to contain the New Covenant of God with man, is called into question on innumerable points by the test of the analytical reason which is accepted in all other fields of research as the providential means of removing error, and attaining to a just estimation of the nature of fact, knowledge and truth.

Now the analysis of documents of this nature as to their content, authorship and date, and the enquiry into the reliability of their writers as to questions of historical fact, consistency of statement, and all such more general problems,

is, as we have seen, generally classed under the term “higher criticism.” With the nature and with some of the results of this criticism the educated reader is gradually becoming familiar, and it is generally being understood that the dogma of the plenary inerrancy of Scripture is only tenable at the expense of the grossest self-contradiction and a wilful shutting of the eyes to plainly demonstrated facts.

But there is another branch of criticism of which the general public has no knowledge, but which should logically precede all other enquiry. This branch is known as the “lower criticism,” and concerns itself exclusively with the letter of the text.

Now when it is stated bluntly and broadly that we have no certain text of the New Testament documents, it will at once be seen how enormously important is this so-called “lower” branch of the subject, and how apparently preposterous (in the most literal sense of the word) it is for such a wealth of argument and controversy to be expended in the domain of the higher criticism, before we know with some approximation to certainty what it precisely is about which we have to argue. In the New Testament MSS. alone no less than 150,000 various readings have been counted.

Textual criticism, however, is so difficult and



technical that no one but the trained specialist has the slightest chance of dealing with the subject at first hand, and this is equally the case in the more abstruse problems of the higher criticism. It results, therefore, that the layman has to content himself with the more general problems of the higher, in which for the most part not only is the non-specialist entirely dependent on a translation based on an arbitrary text, but even many of the higher critics themselves are either in the same position, or very insufficiently grounded in the all-important science of the lower branch of criticism, many of their arguments being founded on readings which in every probability are other than the original wording of the passages in question.

But though textual criticism is too difficult for any but a specialist to follow out in detail, even the most unlearned is competent to understand its nature and the general problems it raises, once the facts are put before him; and the inevitable result of even the most casual acquaintance with the nature of the history of the tradition of the text of the New Testament, is to destroy for ever any possible hope of retaining the fond faith of the ignorant in the infallibility of the wording of the received text of even the most sacred utterances of the Master Himself. If of the many sermons in the year

devoted to rhapsodising over the text of the Authorised Version, one only were devoted by every minister of religion to instructing his flock in these elementary facts of the history of the text, the cause of Christianity (as an expression of truth) would be far better served than by the tacit apologies for bibliolatry which are poured forth year in and year out throughout Christendom.

But not only is the subject shelved in the pulpit, it is equally tabooed in general literature and relegated to expensive and technical treatises, hedged about with such difficulties that the ordinary layman is frightened from their perusal. Such a timorous policy is unworthy of this age of free enquiry; it is the imitation of a Peter who denied his Master, rather than devotion to the example of the Christ who preferred death to a lie. It is the truth alone which shall make us free, and that truth can be no better served than by putting before the public the general facts of the textual criticism of the basic documents of the Christian faith, in such a form that all can understand their importance, and so be able the better to distinguish essentials from non-essentials, and to learn that the Spirit of Truth cannot, in the very nature of things, be contained in documents made by and transmitted through the hands of fallible mortals.

The Roman Catholic Church claims that it has authority given it by the Spirit of God to pronounce infallibly what is the authoritative text of Holy Scripture, and those who have committed their souls to its keeping are compelled to maintain at peril of excommunication that they have the "Word of God" in its legal purity. But those who have rejected the authority of this egregious presumption, and who claim the freedom of their private judgment, have no such decision binding upon their conscience; they have no authority but the Bible itself, and it is just this authority which is now called in question. Between the absolute position of God-given authority to pronounce infallible decisions claimed by the Roman Church and utmost freedom in the exercise of reason and judgment there is no logical halting place. When the appeal is to a book, and no man can say what was the original wording of the book, there can by means of the book be no authoritative decision on innumerable points of doctrine based on the ignorant confidence that the received text is inspired in the very letter.

And if the fervent believer in the "Word of God"—in this its most materialistic sense—should be grieved and dismayed at the recital of the history and fortunes of the text of the sacred narrative and sayings, there is this much com-

fort for him, if he reflect that the work that is being done is not the plot and contrivance of an enemy, but that it is the spirit of truth in Christianity itself which is working this self-purification of the faith. It is a matter of deep congratulation, and of high hope for the future of their faith, for Christians to reflect that it is their own brethren and professors who are the pioneer workers in this field; these believers in a sane and essential, if not in a truly spiritual and mystic Christianity, are the foremost champions in combatting the outgrown dogmas and superstitions of a materialistic past.

Speaking as an entirely independent student of general religion, the adherent of no dogmatic system and of no formulated faith, the fact that Christianity in the person of its "critics" has begun to "tackle itself," seems to me to argue a strength of character and determination that the other world-faiths, in the persons of their learned men, would do well to emulate; for the canons of criticism which have been developed by Christian scholars working on their own documents, can and should be applied by the learned of the sister-faiths to their own scriptures. It may of course be foreign to the scheme of things that the learned among our Eastern brethren should do this special work, but this much seems certain, that if no effort is made by them some-

how or other to purify their own faiths and so contribute something to the general good of advancing humanity, they must inevitably in course of time fall out of the race, and those who have had the courage to endeavour to set their own house in order, will gradually develop a generation which will readily absorb the essentials of all other forms of the common religion of mankind, and be the chief instruments in inaugurating that golden age of conscious realisation of a truly universal faith, which will set the will of humanity in one direction and transform it from a chaos of warring mortals into a cosmos of immortal gods.

But to return to the prosaic present, to the fortunes of the conflict of science with theology in the West, to the textual criticism of the New Covenant documents. The best work published in English on the subject is a translation from the German of Nestle's admirable manual, *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the Greek New Testament* (London: Williams and Norgate; 1901). Professor Nestle's high reputation for accurate scholarship, his entire freedom from all theological bias, and his independence of the views of all prior authorities, are sufficient guarantees of his ability to chronicle the facts and state the case impartially. The layman must get his facts from some specialist, and no

better book than Nestle's Introduction can serve our purpose for what follows. The learned reader may be also referred to the monumental work of Gaspar René Gregory which is in process of publication, *Textcritik des Neuen Testament* (Leipzig), the first volume of which appeared in 1900.

It may perhaps seem to all of my readers an entirely unnecessary thing to preface this *résumé* by the statement that the documents of the New Testament are written in *Greek*, but there are millions of unthinking folk who to all intents and purposes act and speak as though these documents were written in Latin or English or German. The Roman Catholic meditates on the letter of the Vulgate or Common Latin version of Jerome (which the official decrees of his Church have declared to be equally inspired with the Greek text itself), the English-speaking Protestant pins his faith to the Authorised Version of King James, and the laity of the German Reformed Church seek their authority in the version of Luther.

Now, the “Word of God” in its literal sense is to be sought for, if it can be found, in the Greek text alone. Prior to 1514 the Greek text of the New Testament was transmitted solely by the uncertain means of manuscripts, the nature and fortunes of which transmission will be discussed



later on. It may be a matter of surprise to learn that the Bible was first of all printed in Latin translation (in 1462), and that upwards of half a century elapsed before Cardinal Ximenes produced his costly *editio princeps* of the original text; but this printing of the Greek was by no means an unmixed blessing, for the accuracy and wealth of reproduction ensured by the new method rapidly stereotyped an arbitrary text selected at haphazard with what was practically utter disregard of all critical method, and in entire ignorance of the complex nature of the material which had to be analysed and collated. Printed at Complutum, a small town in Spain, and accompanied with a Latin translation, this famous first edition is known as the Complutensian Polyglot.

Immediately it appeared the renowned humanist Erasmus was urged to undertake an edition which might forestall the circulation of this costly work, and in less than a year from accepting the commission, he rushed into print the first edition of his text (1516). Erasmus himself confessed that his text was "precipitated rather than edited"; nevertheless, "at the present time this text of Erasmus is still disseminated by tens and even hundreds of thousands by the British and Foreign Bible Society." In this connection it is interesting to notice that it was

only in his third edition (1522) that Erasmus (overawed by the clamour of an utterly uncritical public) incorporated the notorious "comma Johanneum," 1 John v. 7, the passage concerning the "three witnesses," on which so many pious folk base their trinitarianism, the verse which runs: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one"—a passage rejected even by Luther from his version (though added later on by others), and absent from all but the latest MSS.

The first edition to contain the embryo of a critical apparatus was that of Stephen, the Parisian Typographer-Royal (1550), but his text was practically the same as that of Ximenes and Erasmus.

By the reproduction of Stephen's text in Walton's London Polyglot in 1600, it became the *Textus Receptus*, or received text, in England, and in 1624 the Elzevirs of Leyden produced the same result on the Continent. By the catch-word in their preface that this was the text "received by all," they actually succeeded in making it the most widely disseminated of all for upwards of two centuries. The English Bible Society alone has issued at least 352,000 copies of it, and at the present time is still printing it exclusively. "For several centuries,

therefore, thousands of Christian scholars have contented themselves with a text based ultimately on two or three late MSS. lying at the command of the first editors—Stephen, Erasmus, and Ximenes.”

It may be of interest to state here that the Greek text in MS. is not divided into chapters and verses. The division into chapters was first invented in Paris for the Latin Bible by Stephen Langton (who died Archbishop of Canterbury in 1228), and employed for the first time in the Greek text of the Complutensian edition. The division into verses was invented by the typographer Stephen for his 1551 edition.

But though this Textus Receptus, or received text, has thus become the stereotyped letter of the “Word of God” for the many, the few have not been content with such uncritical work, and have gradually collected the materials and evolved the methods whereby some of them fondly imagine that at length, not only the outlines of the foundation, but even the principal courses of a really critical text, have been now quite definitely filled in. Indeed many admirers of these scholars think that there is little more to be done in the matter, and that New Testament textual criticism has reached its maturity; but as a matter of fact it is still in its early youth. For though its period of childhood is

said by some to have closed with the seventeenth century, it would be far more correct to say that its youth did not really begin till well on in the nineteenth century, when Lachmann (1793–1851) for the first time broke with the Textus Receptus altogether, and endeavoured to restore the text to the form in which it had been read in the ancient Church somewhere about the year 380—a late enough date even so, we should think.

To the special work done by the great pioneers of textual criticism it would be too long to refer in this short sketch, and a bald list of names and dates would be quite unintelligible.

It is to be noticed, however, that “the latest and most thorough attempt yet made at a complete edition of the New Testament” is the work of Westcott and Hort (1881), who played so important a part in deciding the readings on which the revisions in the English Revised Version were made. Westcott and Hort had devoted thirty years of study to the subject, and the rest of the revisers felt as laymen in the presence of specialists. So great was their authority that many to-day regard the text W. H. almost as sacrosanct. Broadly speaking, they sought to establish what they called a neutral text, that is to say, they rejected both the late type of MSS. on which the Textus Re-

ceptus was based, and also the type of the early Syrian and old Latin versions, which they regarded as displaying all sorts of remarkable corruptions. This bald statement is doubtless of little interest to the general reader, but when it is pointed out that all the latest research is tending to prove in innumerable ways that it is precisely these early Syrian and old Latin versions which contain the *earliest* tradition of the text, it will at once be evident that the neutral text of W. H. is built on a foundation but slightly less shifting than the Textus Receptus, and that the Revised Version is to the Authorised Version in many respects as Tweedledum to Tweedle-dee.

Since Westcott and Hort's edition much work on the text of separate books, or groups of books, has been done, though no new complete edition has been attempted. As a result of these labours "there can be no question"—to quote and italicise our authority—"that we have a text corresponding far more closely to the original than that contained in the first editions of the Greek New Testament issued at the beginning of the sixteenth century, *on which are based the translations into modern languages used in the Christian Churches of Europe at the present time.* It would be a vast mistake, however, to conclude from the textual agreement displayed

in these latest editions, that research in this department of New Testament study has reached its goal. Just as explorers, in excavating the ruined temples of Olympia or Delphi, are able from the fragments they discover to reconstruct the temple, to their mind's eye at least, in its ancient glory—albeit it is actually in ruins—so, too, much work remains to be done ere *even all the materials are re-collected and the plan determined* which shall permit us to restore the Temple of the New Testament Scriptures to its original form.”

In brief, to put it in words that all can understand, the “stone which the builders” have so far “rejected,” has been shown by the latest research to be in every probability the “head of the corner.” The most “corrupt” type of text is found to contain the earliest readings. The materials have to be “re-collected” and the “plan” entirely re-drawn. What, then, are these materials? They are, broadly speaking, Greek manuscripts, ancient versions and quotations from the early Fathers.

With the perfected methods of printing, where thousands of identical copies are produced, it is now impossible to prove what the author actually wrote, even if we possess his original autograph MS., for he may have added and altered on the proof sheets. But in the case of hand-copying,



where, even if the greatest care be used, every new copy is a fresh source of error—of natural and recurrent errors, which can be easily classified, not to speak of deliberate alteration to serve dogmatic purposes, or of ignorant accommodation to wording more familiar to the scribe—the ultimate test of accuracy is beyond question the author's own manuscript or autograph. Now it is hardly necessary to state that no autograph of a single book of the New Testament is known to be in existence. We have, then, at best to do with copies, the so-called manuscripts (that is to say, the Greek MSS.), none of which go back earlier than the fifth century.

But this is, fortunately, not the only source of our information. As early as the second century in the East, South, and West, translations were made of the various books. And even though we have to allow for the same classes of errors in the copying of the autograph translations, it is tolerably certain that a second century translation will represent with general accuracy the second century Greek MS. from which it was derived. Now in the case of most of the existing Greek MSS., and certainly in the case of all the oldest, we do not know where they originated. But it is quite certain that a Coptic version could not have originated in Gaul, nor a Latin in Syria. In this way it is evident that

ancient versions help us in determining the type of text read in early times in particular regions; and further, if we find that in the Latin West, in the Syrian East, and the Egyptian South the several versions agree, then it is highly probable that in those passages which are common to them all we are safely on the road towards a common original and the earliest times. The ancient versions are thus a potent auxiliary among our materials.

But we have also another source of information. We possess a considerable Christian literature which begins to gather volume from the beginning of the second century onwards, and which teems with quotations from the New Testament books. These patristic quotations, when used with discrimination, are of great value, for they help us to locate the types of our ancient MSS. with greater exactitude and to trace their history further than by means of the versions. But before we can make use of them “we must make sure that our author has quoted accurately and not loosely from memory, and also that the quotations in his book have been accurately preserved and not accommodated to the current text of their time by later copyists or even by editors of printed editions, as has actually been done even in the nineteenth century.” And in connection with this it may

surprise the reader to learn that as yet we have no really critical texts of the vast majority of the writings of the Fathers.

In our next chapter we will endeavour to consider in greater detail these three classes of auxiliaries to the reconstruction of the original text, so that the intelligent enquirer who desires to know especially how the words of the canonical Gospels have come down to us, may be put in possession of at least the nature of the problem, and learn how far we are at present from any really certain knowledge of what those famous scribes "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke" and "John" verbally set down in their autographs, much less of the actual wording of their "sources."

## THE NATURE OF THE TRADITION OF THE GOSPEL AUTOGRAPHS.

No other documents of antiquity possess such a wealth of MS. copies as the books of the Greek New Testament collection. No less than 3829 MSS. have been already definitely catalogued, while it is believed that there are some 2000 still uncatalogued, without taking into account a number of MSS. stored away in monasteries in the East and as yet uninspected and even undiscovered by Western scholars, and also doubtless a number of MSS. still buried in tombs or sand-heaps in Egypt. The vast majority of these MSS., however, are of late date; further, most of them contain only separate portions or separate books, while some of these even are mere fragments.

The most important task of the lower criticism is to arrange and classify this MS. chaos, and the most important factor to guide it in this herculean task is the question of age. MSS.

have therefore been divided into Uncials (or Majuscules) and Cursives (or Minuscules), according to the style of writing held to be in use at earlier and later times; but the latest discoveries in palæography necessitate a reconsideration of this hard and fast division as a reliable criterion of date.

Uncials, literally "inch-high" letters, are capitals. In olden times, as in the present day, these capital unjoined Greek letters were used in inscriptions; they are also supposed to have been used exclusively in MSS. of books of an important or sacred character. But prior to the Christian era—perhaps long prior to it—there was also used for ordinary purposes a cursive or running style, in which the letters were joined together. This running hand has, so far, been generally believed to have found its way into the MSS. of the Bible only in the ninth century. Of the 3829 catalogued MSS. there are only 127 Uncials to 3702 Minuscules.

Now as Greek copyists were not accustomed to date their MSS. it is the further task of palæography, or the science of deciphering ancient writings, and determining their dates, etc., to settle the criteria whereby these Uncials and Cursives may be further classified as to date. These criteria are as yet very imperfect, for distinctions based on considerations of the

writing being angular or round, upright or sloping, or even sometimes of the punctuation being simple or elaborate, and deductions drawn from the material of which the document is composed, are often exceedingly misleading.

That the style of writing as criterion of date of undated MSS. is largely a matter of private opinion may be seen from a comparative table of the results arrived at by specialists. Thus while Vollert assigns as many of the Uncials as five to the fourth century, von Gebhard assigns but two, while Scrivener will not admit a single Uncial to so early a date, and for the rest of the centuries there is a similar or even greater clash of opinion. Moreover, the latest discoveries of dated papyrus MSS. of the first centuries have shown that all prior opinions and tentative canons of judgment on these points have to be entirely revised.

It is equally a question of opinion with regard to material as a criterion of date, and though it is tolerably certain that cotton paper was not employed till the eighth century, parchment and papyrus have no dividing lines, even in Egypt itself. As to the absurd legend that parchment was first used by Eumenes (197-159 B.C.), king of Pergamum in Asia Minor, surely there were books in the Greek world written on hide of some kind before Eumenes formed his library !



As books became more widely used, however, and the supply of papyrus exhausted in Egypt, parchment grew scarcer and scarcer, so that it became the practice to erase the writing from an old MS. in order to use it for a new work. Such MSS. are called palimpsests or rescripts, and it is often possible in great measure to recover the older writing under the later lettering. Thus a late text may hide the precious remnants of an early document.

Now as in all the early MSS. the writing is continuous, there are no breaks between words or even sentences. Further, as all breathings (or marks of aspiration) and accents are omitted and the punctuation is of the most primitive kind, or almost non-existent, the same combination of letters can frequently be read in two, or even more, absolutely distinct ways; we know historically that it was frequently a question with Church teachers as to whether a sentence should be taken interrogatively or otherwise, or how at all the sentences were to be divided.

MSS. may further be classified according to their contents, for it is to be remarked that of all our known Uncials only one (the Codex Sinaiticus) contains the whole of the New Testament complete. A few others, like the Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, were once complete, but are no longer so. The vast majority

of MSS. contain only separate portions of the New Testament, or even only separate books. Nor is this surprising, seeing that the New Testament is not a single book but a collection of groups of books and single volumes, which were at first and even long afterwards circulated separately. Thus not only in the MSS. (both Cursive and Uncial) which contain the whole collection, but also to a certain extent in printed editions, there is to be found the greatest variety in the order of the several parts, and of the several books of each part. For instance, the Gospels are found in any and every order. Among the Uncials, while 73 contain the Gospels, only seven contain the Apocalypse ; and of these 73 again only six are quite complete. Of the 20 Uncials containing the Pauline Letters only one is entirely complete. Hence, as Professor Nestle says, "it is plain that our resources are not so great, after all, as the number of MSS. given above would lead us to expect."

A word may not be out of place here concerning the three great Uncial MSS. which once contained the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments. In mentioning them we append the well known symbols by which these MSS. are known, but in this connection it should be understood that the letter or number symbols by which the Uncials and Cursives are designated are

arbitrary, and not a scientific classification according either to age or importance.

Codex Sinaiticus (S) is so called because it was discovered in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, by Tischendorf; its pages were recovered piecemeal, so to say, after three visits, and not till 1859 did Tischendorf carry off the complete MS. in triumph to St. Petersburg. It dates probably as far back as the fifth century. Besides the books of the Old and New Testaments, it also includes Barnabas and Hermas, presumably an indication of the early date of its original, a time when the Canon was still fluid. On the other hand, the "corrections" of no fewer than seven hands have been discovered in it. No one knows where the original copy was written, but it is generally ascribed to the West, and even definitely by some to Rome.

Codex Alexandrinus (A.) is so called because it contains a note saying that it was presented to the library of the Patriarch of Alexandria in 1098. The Codex was sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople to Charles I. in 1628, and is now in the British Museum. It is supposed to belong to the fifth century, and to have been written at Alexandria, the Coptic forms of A and M indicating an Egyptian origin. Thirty-one leaves of the New Testament portion are missing, and it also contains the non-canonical First Letter of

Clement of Rome, and a fragment of the so-called Second Letter.

Codex Vaticanus (B.) is one of the greatest treasures of the Vatican, and was placed in the library by pope Nicolas V., shortly after its foundation. Part of Hebrews, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and the Apocalypse are wanting.

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C.) is the most important palimpsest, and is now in the National Library, Paris. It has its name from the fact that in the twelfth century thirty-eight treatises of the Syrian Church Father Ephraem (d. 373 A.D.) were written over the original text. Of the N. T. part, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, thirty-seven chapters from the Gospels, ten from the Acts, forty-two from the Epistles, and eight from the Apocalypse, have been lost. It is supposed to date from the fifth century, and to have had its origin in Egypt.

Speaking of these four great MSS., Professor Nestle remarks interestingly: "It will be observed that at the present time they are distributed among the Capitals of the great branches of the Christian Church, viz., St. Petersburg (Greek), Rome and Paris (Roman), and London (Anglican)." But he adds significantly: "German scholars have taken a foremost place in their investigation."

Of the remaining Uncial MSS. by far the most

important is Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D.). This MS. was presented by Calvin's friend, Theodore Beza, to the University of Cambridge in 1581. Though it is said to be not older than the sixth century, and though inferior in compass and at present in general repute (for its readings have been so far consistently rejected) to the four above mentioned, it is now being gradually recognised by independent specialists as surpassing them all in importance. It now contains little more than the Gospels (with certain lacunæ) and Acts, but originally contained other books as well. The Gospels are found in the order Matthew, John, Luke, Mark. The great importance of this Codex is that in it "innumerable passages occur . . . where the text of D. differs in the most remarkable manner from that of *all* the Greek MSS. we are acquainted with."

At least nine later hands (? "correctors") can be distinguished in it. Scrivener even claimed that he could distinguish as many as twenty hands that had been engaged in either the correction or annotation of the text. But, fortunately, it is accompanied with an old Latin version translated directly from the Greek of the parent MS. Now seeing that Codex D. is said to have been discovered at Lyons in the monastery of Irenæus, and that "its text agrees with the Scripture quotations found in that

Father even in the matter of clerical mistakes," it is possible that the Greek text may have been derived from the copy of Irenæus himself. This would carry us back to early days—cir. 180 A.D.—in the writer's opinion to some fifty years only from the autographs. But even so, "we are not at liberty to regard even the oldest of the MSS. as presenting the very form of the New Testament autographs"—not even the copy of an Irenæus. Rendel Harris's just published study, *The Annotators of Codex Bezaë*, however, renders the Lyons' theory of origin highly problematical. In any case Codex D., instead of being a mass of "corruption," has become a MS. of the highest importance.

Now recent papyrus discoveries have shown that "no distinction of time can be drawn between the Uncial and Cursive hands," even of the first centuries. "The sharp line of demarcation, therefore, which has hitherto been drawn between these two classes of MSS. has no real justification in fact."

The earliest editions of the printed Greek text had to be content with "indifferent and late" Minuscules, while the general tendency of intermediate criticism has been to reject Minuscules altogether and base the text on the oldest Uncials exclusively. It is, however, now recognised that the text of a demonstrated late



MS., Cursive or even Uncial, "may be derived from a very early source through comparatively few intermediaries, and that it is possible to reconstruct a lost original by means of a comparison of several witnesses." Both on this account and also on account of the new data acquired for palæographical science by recent papyrus "finds," the Minuscule or Cursive MSS. demand as careful inspection as the Uncials.

We have picked out among the Uncials the three great *éditions de luxe*, so to speak, not because of their proved intrinsic importance, but because they have been hitherto generally regarded as the most precious, and we have referred to Codex D. because of its now proved great critical importance. Of the information given concerning the main Minuscules there is little that can interest the general reader. Those, however, who have seen specimens of Haupt's Bible with its polychrome device for indicating the various strata of the text of the composite books of the Old Testament, may be interested to hear how this device has been also employed in one of the Minuscules (16) in the Paris National Library, though of course for pious and not critical purposes. Codex 16 is written in four colours. The narrative is transcribed in green, the words of Jesus and the Angels are in red and occasionally in gold, the

words of the disciples in blue, while those of the Pharisees, of the people, and of the Devil are written in black! In this connection it is interesting to notice that Ignatius of Loyola, the famous founder of the Society of Jesus, employed a similar conceit in a book of quotations he wrote out in the earliest years of his entrance on the holy life.

Another class of MSS., which till quite recently was even more neglected than the Minuscules, is the Lectionaries, or MSS. containing only those portions (*pericopæ*) of the scriptures read at Church services. Their date is not easy to determine, because in this class of document the Uncial hand was used much later than in others. There are some thousands of these Lectionaries, and though they are of minor importance they may serve to fix the type of text in the provinces to which they belong.

We now pass to our second great source of material for the reconstruction of the text—the early Versions. We have here, of course, nothing to do with the question of the original language of the Sayings of Jesus; nor yet with the further question of the language in which the “sources” of the evangelists were written; all this, enormously important as it is, lies beyond the Greek autographs of the four canonical Gospels. The early Versions are translations from these auto-

graphs, or rather at best from early copies of them. The Letters of Paul may have been translated even in the first century, but our main interest is with the Gospels, the very earliest versions of which may at best date back to the middle of the second century.

Of these the most important for the East would be into that form of Aramaic used chiefly in Damascus and Mesopotamia and now commonly known as Syriac. In the West, though Greek was generally understood by the educated (so that when Paul writes to Rome in Greek he must have been writing either to aliens or to people of some education)—when we find Christianity in the second century spreading in the south of Gaul, in the north of Italy and north of Africa, there must have been an early need for translation into Latin. So also in the South, early need must have been felt in Egypt, especially up the river, for translation into the vernacular.

With regard to the Syriac versions, of which a wealth of most valuable MSS. exists, it is to be remarked that the "common" New Testament of the Syrian Church, in all the branches into which it has been divided since the fifth century, even up to the present day, omits the Antilegomena, or disputed books, viz., 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and the Apocalypse, an

indication that it goes back to a time and to a region when these books were not reckoned in the New Testament canon. This Peshitto ("simple" or "common") translation has hitherto been called the "Queen of the versions." Of the MSS. of this version at least ten date from the fifth and thirty from the sixth century, a remarkable number considering the paucity of our Greek MSS. of so early a date. It becomes, therefore, a question of great importance to determine when this version was made. Tradition assigns it to the Apostle Thaddæus, and therefore pigeon-holes it with the Matthew and John problems. From Eusebius (cir. 325 A.D.), however, we learn that the primitive Church historian Hegesippus (cir. 160-180 A.D.) quoted "certain things from the Gospel according to the Hebrews and from the Syriac (Gospel) and particularly from the Hebrew dialect." From this we learn that a Syriac Gospel existed and that it was different from the Gospel according to the Hebrews; though whether this Syriac Gospel was our four Gospels, and what is the precise meaning in this connection of the curious phrase "particularly from the Hebrew dialect," remains an enigma.

Now in 1842 a Syriac MS. of the Gospels, the text of which differed considerably from the Peshitto, was brought back from Egypt by

Cureton and deposited in the British Museum, and in 1894 Mrs. Lewis, after three visits to the Monastery of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai, copied and published the text of yet another MS. closely related to the Curetonian. Both these MSS. are undeniably "very old," and though the question is still an open one, it seems very probable that these versions are earlier than the Peshitto.

The importance of this may be seen by taking an example. The Curetonian and Lewis Syriac preserve the very ancient reading of Matt. i. 16: "Joseph . . . *begot* Jesus the Christ." This reading is preserved by a number of the oldest Latin MSS., but is found in Greek in only four Minuscules. Here, then, in Syriac from the far East is found a reading preserved in Latin witnesses from the far West, whereas our Greek MSS. would allow us to imagine that "always, everywhere and by all" it was handed down as it is orthodoxly believed.

Of other Syriac versions, we possess the text of the revision by Thomas of Heraclea (616-17 A.D.) of a very literal version made in 508 for Philoxenus, Bishop of Mabug. And "it is very remarkable that there were MSS. in Alexandria at the beginning of the seventh century which were regarded by Thomas of Harkel as particularly well authenticated, but which deviate

in a marked degree from the bulk of our present MSS., and which, especially in the Acts, agree almost entirely with Codex D."

Among Syriac Lectionaries, or *Evangelitaria*, is to be noticed one which preserves, besides many other peculiarities, the name of the robber (*Matt.* xxvii. 17) as Jesus Barrabas.

We now pass to the Latin versions. The most famous is the Vulgate, the common Bible of the Roman Church from the early Middle Ages onward. This revision was made by Jerome (*Hieronymus*) at Rome, at the request of Pope Damasus. In 382, Jerome sent the first instalment (the four Gospels) of his gigantic undertaking to Damasus, accompanied with a letter, which began as follows: "Thou compellest me to make a new work out of an old; after so many copies of the Scriptures have been dispersed throughout the whole world, I am now to occupy the seat of arbiter, as it were, and seeing they disagree, to decide which of them accords with the truth of the Greek." There are, he says, "almost as many (Latin) versions as manuscripts."

We learn further from Augustine (354-430 A.D.), who lived in the north of Africa, that there was at this time "an endless variety and multitude of translators," among which versions he considers the Italic the most faithful. On



the ground of this passage all pre-Jeromic versions have been inaccurately classed as Itala, but Augustine must have meant by the term a particular version only, most probably that current in northern Italy, Augustine himself being the pupil of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan.

Jerome professes to have made a careful comparison of the Greek MSS. at his disposal, and to have based his revision upon this collation, but he seems to have inserted new readings from the Greek only in the Gospels, and even in them to have made alteration in the familiar Latin wording of the current Roman version only when a change of meaning was necessary. For the rest of the books he contented himself with improving the grammar and diction.

The revision of Jerome, however, gradually ousted all other competitors, and became eventually the Authorised Version of the Latin Church. But of what version was Jerome's the revision? It was most probably the current version at Rome in his time. Now, though the text of Jerome's revision has suffered from much "emendation" throughout the centuries, it is a comparatively easy task to restore the original wording, because we have no less than 8000 MSS. extant, and some of these are very early. But even so, we have only arrived at *one* pre-Jeromic version emended by Jerome's industry.

The direct materials of the pre-Jeromic versions consist of only 38 MSS. and quotations from early Latin Fathers. Among these, however, are to be found many witnesses to a more immediate tradition of the Greek text than Jerome's readings based on a theologically rather than a historically critical collation of MSS. ; the material, though small in bulk, is therefore of vast importance for the textual criticism of the New Testament.

For the South the most important versions are the Egyptian or Coptic, in several dialects. The Bohairic, or Alexandrian, and the Sahidic, or Upper Egyptian, versions are remarkable for the fact that among the Gospels John invariably stands first, and the Apocalypse is absent. These two versions are based upon quite different Greek originals. Of the Middle Egyptian dialects only fragments are as yet known to exist. Hitherto the Bohairic version has been regarded as the purest, but "a correct edition and a critical application of these Egyptian versions is, next to a fresh examination of the Minuscules, the task of most importance at present for the textual criticism of the New Testament. For the Sahidic version in particular represents a type of text found hitherto almost exclusively in the West, and looked upon as the outcome of Western corruption and license, whereas it may

really bear the most resemblance to the original form. In the Acts especially its agreement with the text of Codex D. is remarkable."

Of the Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian (in some MSS. of which also John precedes the Synoptists, and the Apocalypse is absent prior to the twelfth century), the Georgian, Arabic, Persic, Old High German, Anglo-Saxon, Bohemian and Slavonic versions nothing need be said, though they are here and there valuable for the restoration of the original text.

It is, however, to be noticed that it is not in such centres of evolution of theological orthodoxy as Rome and Alexandria that we are to look for the earliest traditions, but in distant regions where what was originally received was held to with greater conservatism.

The third source of our materials consists of quotations found in other books, chiefly the writings of the Church Fathers, which belong to a period earlier than any of our existing codices. The quotations of early heretical writers have also to be most carefully considered, and also the quotations of the early opponents of Christianity. But all of this material has to be employed with the greatest of caution.

We have to remember in the first place that brief quotations were generally made from memory, owing to the difficulty of looking up

passages in bulky MSS. Indeed, the very numerous and striking discrepancies between the text of the many quotations from the "Memoirs of the Apostles," found in the writings of Justin Martyr (cir. 150 A.D.), and the now received text of the Gospels, have been explained by apologists on this supposition; but all the evidence seems to point to the conclusion that the quotations are accurate and therefore that the text of the "Memoirs" differed widely from any type of the Synoptical documents with which we are acquainted, if, indeed, the "Memoirs" were at all these documents. In longer quotations also it was the custom of indolent scribes to copy only the opening words of a familiar passage followed by a convenient "etc." Indeed, as late as 1872 an Oxford editor, in publishing Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on the fourth Gospel, wrote down in his MS. only the initial and concluding words of the text, and allowed the compositor to set up the rest from the *Textus Receptus*! In fact, all the texts of the Fathers require most careful editing before they can be used for critical purposes; for the habit of scribes to accommodate the text of biblical quotations to the form most familiar to themselves was so inherently natural, that so far from being conscious of dishonesty they imagined they were correcting errors!

So far this field of textual criticism has been little tilled, for though the patristic writings have been carefully scrutinised in the interests of dogmatic history, especially for the history of the Canon, there is no collection of patristic quotations to elucidate the history of the text.

Turning next to what Professor Nestle calls the "theory and praxis" of N.T. textual criticism, we may, in conclusion, dwell on a few points of special importance. After speaking of the "official recensions" of the text subsequent to the time of Origen—that is, from the middle of the third century onwards—Professor Nestle considers the question of recension prior to this epoch, "when activity in this field was more disconnected, and might be said to run wild and unrestrained." He thus continues:

"And there is this further difficulty, that some of the writers who fall to be considered in this period came in later times more or less justly under the imputation of heresy, with the consequence that the results of their labours were less widely disseminated, if not deliberately suppressed. In circumstances like these any attempted revision of the text must have been equally mischievous whether it proceeded from the orthodox side or from the opposite. That there were διορθωταί [*i.e.*, correctores] who were supposed to correct the text in the interests of

orthodoxy, we have already learned from Epi-  
 phanius. Indeed, from our point of view the  
 action of the orthodox correctors must be thought  
 the more regrettable of the two, since the books  
 without a doubt parted at their hands with  
 many vivid, strange, and even fantastic traits  
 of language. Even in the matter of style it  
 seems to me incontestable that it was at their  
 hands that the Gospels received that reserved  
 and solemn tone which we would not now  
 willingly part with, and which can be compared  
 to nothing so much as to those solemn pictures  
 of Christ that we see painted on a golden back-  
 ground in Byzantine churches. For myself, at  
 least, I have not the slightest doubt that the  
 Gospel, and the Gospel particularly, was origin-  
 ally narrated in a much more vivacious style."

As examples of this greater vivacity and  
 homeliness the following examples are given.  
 The Authorised Version reads (Matt. vi. 8):  
 "Your Father knoweth what things ye have  
 need of before ye ask Him"; but Codex D. pre-  
 serves a closer resemblance to the graphic original  
 in the words "before even ye open your mouth."  
 So also in the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree  
 (Luke xiii. 7): "Cut it down; why cumbereth  
 it the ground?" says the owner according to the  
 Received Text. But Codex D. reads graphi-  
 cally: "Bring the axe!" And in the answer



of the vine-dresser, instead of the Authorised and colourless "till I shall dig about it and dung it," D. gives back the action in life-like diction, "I will throw in a basket of dung."

The modern textual critic, then, in dealing with a MS. must follow a method of cure far different to the correctores of antiquity. He must be a skilful physician, knowing all the ailments to which the reproduction of MSS. is subject, before he can restore an ancient scripture to health. In the first place he must decide whether the MS. was dictated or copied, for the injuries to the text will vary considerably in the two cases. If the MS. is the copy of another and not dictated, he must remember that errors most frequently arise from the illegibility of the original, proper names especially being often very doubtful. In the case of "continuous writing," again, owing to the eye of the scribe jumping from one word or group of words to another the same or similar to it, frequent errors occur, and there is often confusion and transposition of letters in single words. He has also to bear in mind the probability of unconscious and conscious or intentional additions, also grammatical corrections, assimilations to parallel passages, and changes made for liturgical or dogmatic purposes.

Such are some of the main facts of the evolving science of the lower criticism. It must be now

patent, even to the most unlearned reader, that once we know the bare elementary facts of the history of the text, it is utterly impossible in the nature of things that there can be any question of verbal inspiration. The thing is not possible in face of the facts ; it is, therefore, unthinkable by the rational mind.

## THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TRACES IN THE EXISTING DOCUMENTS.

THE intellectual activity which has manifested such a rapid development during the last three or four centuries among Western nations, has not only yielded remarkable results in every domain of exact investigation, but has added countless new facts to our common store of knowledge. In reviewing, however, the history of these eventful years and the mental conquests achieved by the application of the scientific method to natural phenomena and human affairs, no fact is more striking than the dearth of positive additions to our spiritual knowledge by the professed custodians of science. In every other branch of human knowledge "new discoveries" have been made; in religion alone, as far as its facts are concerned, we are where we were before science came to our aid. It may, indeed, have been designed that we should have to pass through the lesser mysteries of intellectual

development before we can approach the contemplation of the greater. It may be that a more exact knowledge of the facts of nature is required before we can proceed to a more exact knowledge of the soul and of the Divine. The fact nevertheless remains that as yet official science knows nothing of the soul.

It will be observed that in the above we have spoken of the "*facts*" of religion, of "*positive* additions" to our spiritual knowledge, and of a "*more exact* knowledge" of the soul and of the Divine. We do not mean to say that there are no facts upon which to go, or that there are no students of these facts, but that there has been no addition made to them by the officially acknowledged representatives of the science of exact observation. So far they have not been occupied with the facts *of* religion; they have so far devoted their energies solely to an analysis of the facts *about* religion—that is to say, to the statements and assertions of religionists. It is the developed intellect in mankind questioning the assertions of men concerning matters which lie beyond the range of normal experience; and though most of those engaged in the struggle may be unconscious of it, it is not impermissible to believe that these apparently destructive forces have been, not only let loose, but directed by a wise providence for the special purpose of clearing

the way to a better understanding of the actual facts of religion itself, the real nature of the experience and emotions which form the ground of its existence.

In every effort of the mind to arrive at greater certitude, it must be that it should pass through the natural phases of the "turning of the wheel"—or, to be more precise, though apparently more mystical, of the involving of the sphere into its centre and its re-evolution in a higher phase. It must pass from the "Everlasting No" through the "Centre of Indifference" to the "Everlasting Yea," as Carlyle has it. So far the results of scientific investigation in the domain of religion have been negative, not positive. But who shall say that this is not a good and a decided gain, when we reflect that in all endeavours towards more exact knowledge and the purification of the mind, the most difficult task is to get rid of erroneous preconceptions and opinions? If the windows of the mind are encrusted with impurities, how shall we ever be able to obtain an unimpeded view of the sun of truth?

Now the present seems a favourable opportunity for passing in review the main results of this purificatory process as applied to the mind of Christendom, the only area of religion at present, we may remark, in which we can detect any sure signs of genuine effort in this direction.

- It is a purification of the *mind*, be it noted, with which we are dealing, and the only subject with which we can at present deal without offence in so marvellously complex a subject as religion. The purification of the heart is another matter, and upon this it would be highly presumptuous for any ordinary mortal to pass judgment; he alone who sees the heart can venture to speak positively on the subject.

The present seems a favourable opportunity for such a review, because in the first place there is behind us a full century of painstaking investigation inaugurated by the scholarship of Germany, and in the second place the results of this century's labour on the basic documents of general Christendom are being summed up in two remarkable works in the process of publication, which are intended as the standard books of reference for all Protestant teachers of religion in the English-speaking world. These two works are *The Encyclopædia Biblica* (London: A. & C. Black), and *A Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark). The *Encyclopædia* is edited by Canon Cheyne, D.D., Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, and by J. Sutherland Black, LL.D., formerly assistant editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The *Dictionary* is edited by Dr. Hastings, with the assistance of Profs. Davidson, Driver, and Swete.



The reason for the simultaneous publication of two works covering practically identical ground will not escape the discerning reader. The former, for the most part, represents the standpoint of so-called "advanced" criticism, the latter, generally speaking, gives us the position of more "moderate" opinion; or perhaps, to be more accurate, the Dictionary, in New Testament subjects, favours a moderate view leaning towards the old conservative position, while the Encyclopædia adopts a standpoint of far greater independence, and in some of the most important articles gives a free hand to the expression of the most extreme views.

Both are the work of well-known scholars, and even the moderate position shows an enormous advance in biblical scholarship and more liberal views when compared with the view-point of such a standard book, for instance, as Smith's Dictionary of the Bible. Both number among their contributors the best American as well as the best English scholars. But the Encyclopædia Biblica is rendered especially valuable by welcoming in addition the co-operation of the flower of Continental scholarship; and this in no faint-hearted manner, for at least the half of its contributors are professors in the most important chairs of theology in Germany, Switzerland, and Holland.

It is well known that their predecessors led the way in biblical research, and that the present holders of the chairs of scientific theology have ever since kept in the forefront of enlightened criticism. But in this country, until some twenty-five years ago, when Robertson Smith fought so brilliantly for critical liberty, really independent thought was hardly possible even in Old Testament studies; while in New Testament research English biblical scholarship had owed its origin, not so much to the pure love of knowledge, as to the loyalty to the old order of things displayed by a Lightfoot or a Westcott, and made strong by their fine scholarship and unwearied labours against the inroads of so-called "German theology."

But nowadays all this is being speedily changed; so rapid is the progress which is being made in every field of biblical research that it is a commonplace to note how that views once considered "advanced," or even "dangerous," are now held by not only the moderate party, but even by pronounced conservatives. Indeed, the views of Robertson Smith himself, who was so bitterly attacked by the conservatives of a quarter of a century ago, are now considered quite moderate by the advanced wing of criticism.

But while great strides have been made by many in this country towards complete inde-

pendence in the domain of Old Testament research, there is still a general hesitancy in applying the same canons of judgment to the New Testament documents, although year by year greater and greater boldness is shown by a certain number.

It follows, therefore, from what has been previously said, that though both the new dictionaries make for progress and are valuable contributions to our biblical knowledge, the *Encyclopædia Biblica* is the more progressive and educative, in that it presents the English reader with the views of Continental scholars; and that though this may be considered as "advanced" to-day, in another twenty-five years it will most probably have to be classed as indicative of "moderate" views compared to the standpoint of the next generation. In this we do not mean to say that on some points conservatism will not be eventually justified; nay, its general position of a refusal to bow to the dictates of pure rationalism will, we believe, be triumphantly vindicated. All this may very well be; but, generally speaking, nothing can now prevent the unhesitating on-march of uncompromising investigation into the claims of those who have declared that they were in possession of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, of the religion of the great Master of Christendom.

In this review we shall confine our attention solely to the present position of criticism in its labours on the four documents which are claimed to be the main authentic narratives of the Life and Teachings of the Christ. To bring out the main points of this position, we shall for the most part base ourselves on the admirable summaries and carefully-documented expositions of the two scholars to whom the article on "The Gospels" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* has been entrusted. This article consists of sixty-nine pages, each of two closely printed columns; the descriptive and analytical part is written by the Rev. E. A. Abbott, D.D., and the historical and synthetical is contributed by Dr. Paul W. Schmiedel, Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Zürich, who is also responsible for an article of some thirty pages on "John." We shall also make occasional use of the article on "The Gospels," in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, written by the Rev. V. H. Stanton, D.D., Ely Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. Dr. Abbott may be said to represent the present moderate position, Professor Schmiedel to represent the most advanced school, while Professor Stanton, though for the most part taking up a liberal standpoint, may be said fundamentally to lean to conservatism.

At the outset, we would remind our readers

that the enquiry is mainly with regard to the historical authenticity of the documents known as the four canonical Gospels; whatever the results of that enquiry may be, we are bound to face them boldly, and in prosecuting this enquiry we shall not be wise to start with a mass of presuppositions and prejudices based on early training, but simply with an earnest desire to get at the truth of the matter. For ourselves we have no fear of the results, whatever they may be, because we do not base our belief in the mastership of the Christ or in the basic truths of religion on any special documents, but on a general study of the history of religion, and on a consensus of evidence as to the marvellous exaltation of feeling and thought wrought by the inner impulse given to things religious in the Western world by the compelling presence of the Master of Christendom.

For convenience of reference we shall use the usual abbreviations of the names Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, to distinguish the four documents under discussion; but it should be understood that this does not in any way prejudge the question of their authorship.

First, then, to take up what we may call the Gospels' own account of themselves, with the special purpose of trying to discover whether they have preserved any autobiographical traces,

we will deal with the main features of the question of internal evidence as to origin and date afforded by the documents themselves, as set forth chiefly by Dr. Abbott.

Of these four writings the first three so often agree in subject, order, and even in language, that they are regarded as taking a "common view," and are therefore called Synoptic, and the writers Synoptists. It is "the general view of the course of events given in these Gospels," as contrasted with the "widely different contents of the fourth," which, according to Dr. Stanton, justifies this title.

Of the Synoptists it is found in general that Mk. exhibits the Acts and shorter Words of the Lord; Mt., a combination of the Acts with Discourses of the Lord; Lk., another combination of the Acts with the Discourses, with a further attempt at chronological order. It is to be remarked that the Parables are, roughly speaking, found only in Mt. and Lk. and not in Mk. The matter common to Mt., Mk., and Lk. is called by Dr. Abbott the "Triple Tradition"; this is perhaps a more convenient term than Professor Stanton's "Synoptic Outline," but we still want a satisfactory name for the Synoptic common source. The matter common to Mt. and Lk., but absent in Mk., is called the "Double Tradition."

A critical study of the matter of the Triple



Tradition leads to the conclusion that in this "Mt. and Lk. borrowed (independently of each other), either from our Mk., or more probably from some document embedded in our Mk."

The present edition of Mk. is to be generally distinguished from this "embedded" document by the frequent substitution of "he said" for "he says," or by the substitution of more definite, or classical, or appropriate words and phrases. In fact, it represents one of the stages in the toning down of the graphic and homely expressions of earlier documents referred to by Professor Nestle. It is especially remarkable that Mk. quotes no prophecies in his own person, makes no mention of Jesus' birth or childhood, and gives no account of the resurrection, for the proof that Mk. originally terminated at xvi. 8 is admitted even by the most conservative critics.

The "simplicity and freedom from controversial motive" of Mk. is regarded by Dr. Abbott as "characteristic of Mk.'s early date," and so, also, is the rudeness of Mk.'s Greek. Mk., we are also told, "contains 'stumbling-blocks' in the way of weak believers" omitted in the other Gospels, and this also is considered to point to its antiquity. We have here the general grounds for the now very widely held hypothesis of the priority of Mk.; but these phenomena may be explained on quite different grounds, for a writer's

“rudeness” of style is no proof of his antiquity. Mk.’s style may be rude, but it is not archaic.

In passing to the Double Tradition (matter common to Mt. and Lk. but absent in Mk.), we must notice that there are two subordinate double traditions, namely, the matter common to Mk. and Mt. and to Mk. and Lk., which complicate the problem still further. As to the Double Tradition proper, in general the Acts of the Lord are confined to the details of the Temptation and the healing of the Centurion’s Servant, while the Words, or rather Discourses, of the Lord are very differently arranged by Mt. and Lk. The *exactly similar* passages are for the most part of a prophetic or narrative character. This Double Tradition contains the Parables, none of which, roughly speaking, find a place in the Triple Tradition.

We next come to the question of the introductions of Mt. and Lk., dealing with the nativity and infancy. These differ entirely from one another but for the citation of a fragment from Is. vii. 14, which, in Hebrew, runs : “A young woman shall conceive and bear a (or the) son *and shall call* his name Immanuel.” In other respects Mt. and Lk. altogether diverge, even in the genealogies, which, however, have this much in common, that they trace the descent of Jesus *through Joseph* and not Mary.

We are further told that "there survive even now traces of a dislocation between them and the Gospels into which they are incorporated." This seems to confirm the tradition of Clemens Alexandrinus that "those portions of the Gospels which consist of the genealogies were written first," that is, prior to our Mt. and Lk. The genealogies deny the miraculous conception; Mt. and Lk. assert it, basing themselves, however, not on the Hebrew of Isaiah but on the erroneous Septuagint Greek translation: "The virgin shall be with child, *and thou (i.e., the husband) shalt call* his name Immanuel."

The conclusions of Matthew and Luke treat of Christ's resurrection, and differ widely in their statements; so also does the appendix to Mk., the genuine Mk. breaking off abruptly at xvi. 8, "for they were afraid."

It is to be remarked that the common document of the Triple Tradition begins simply with the ministry of the Baptist, and finishes with the simplest reference to the resurrection, ending with the visit of the women to the tomb.

In the matter of both introductions and conclusions Dr. Abbott points out impartially the historically irreconcilable statements of the Synoptists, as indeed he does throughout in treating each heading of his subject, but for details we must refer our readers to the article itself.

With regard to the post-resurrection utterances ascribed to Jesus, Dr. Abbott sums up his statement of the case with the following weighty words: "We are warned by our knowledge of the various accounts of Christ's revelations to Paul that we must accept none of them as necessarily representing the actual words of Christ himself, though (in various degrees, and subject to various qualifications) *they may be regarded as revelations to the Early Church, conveyed during the period of manifestation, to this or that disciple in the same way in which the vision and the voice were conveyed to Paul at his conversion.*"

And summing up his analysis of the testimony of Paul, our earliest historical witness to Christianity, Dr. Abbott further declares that these facts lead to the following general conclusions:

"(a) Words recorded as having been uttered by Jesus may really have been heard in the course of a 'vision.' (b) Words recorded as uttered in a 'vision' may have been heard in the course of a 'trance.' (c) The alleged occasion of utterance may really be a confusion of two or even more occasions. (d) Some of the words may have proceeded not directly from Jesus, but indirectly, through an inspired speaker."

In these pregnant sentences (the most im-

portant of which we have printed in italics) we are of opinion that Dr. Abbott has put his hand to a key that will unlock many a puzzle of the early days. More than this, he has pointed to a factor not only of importance, but, in our opinion, by far the most important of all in the development of Christian tradition, literature and dogma. It is, therefore, all the more surprising that the contributors to this otherwise admirable Encyclopædia have left the enormous field of mystic Gnostic tradition entirely untilled; indeed, but for a very brief and absolutely useless article on the Gnosis by Jülicher, whose name is not known to any bibliography of writers on Gnosticism, there is no information of any kind on the subject, and the new Encyclopædia has to hide its diminished head when confronted by the painstaking work on this subject done a generation ago by Lipsius, Hort, and Salmon in Smith's Dictionary of Christian Biography.

Turning now to the single traditions of the first and third Synoptists, Mt. seems to have been primarily intended for Jewish readers. Among many considerations which point to this conclusion the most striking is the stress laid on prophecy; this tendency is revealed by the frequent repetition of the phrase, "in order that it might be fulfilled as it is written," a pre-supposition which entirely dominated the mind

of the writer, and blurred his sense of history. In treating of the internal evidence as to date, Dr. Abbott tells us that though some difficult and obscure passages may lead to the belief that Mt. has in some cases preserved the earliest single tradition, yet other far clearer passages indicate "a time when the Eucharist had so long been celebrated in the Church as materially to influence the general traditions of the doctrine of the Christ." In plain words, there is no positive internal evidence of any kind as to date, and even the conservative estimate of Dr. Stanton is very hesitating as to the possibility of getting it into the first century.

As to the single tradition of Lk., the dedication speaks of the "many" written accounts already in circulation. Lk., moreover, writes in the first person, a peculiarity among the evangelists. He dedicates his work to a certain Theophilus, who, if not an imaginary "God-beloved," would appear to have been "a patron, a man of rank." The "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word" have "delivered" their testimony and passed away. The "many" who had "attempted to draw up a formal narrative," were clearly not "eye-witnesses," nor were they, in the opinion of the writer of our third Gospel, successful in their task; they had not "traced everything up to its source," nor written "accurately" nor yet "in order."



As a corrector in the Triple Tradition, Lk. is a linguistic purist, but in his own introduction his narrative of the infancy takes an "archaic" and Hebraic or Aramaic turn, facts which, one would think, point to yet another source for Lk. The keynote of Lk.'s doctrinal characteristics as compared with Mk. and Mt. is that redemption is for "all the peoples, a light for the revelation of the Gentiles." As to internal evidence of date, Lk. definitely describes the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) as the result of a siege and capture; this is also to be seen (but less clearly) in Mk. and Mt. Lk., then, must be later than 70 A.D. Beyond this there is no clear internal evidence which can fix a date-limit.

Summing up the general evidence as to Lk.'s position historically, Dr. Abbott writes: "Although Lk. attempted to write 'accurately' and 'in order,' yet he could not always succeed. When deciding between an earlier and later date, between this and that place or occasion, between metaphor and literalism, between what Jesus himself said and what He said through His disciples, he had to be guided by evidence which sometimes led him right but not always." This judgment of how Lk. treated his literary material is based not only on faults of commission, but also on "Lk.'s absolute omission of some genuine and valuable traditions"—where we may point out

that a totally different construction might be put on Lk.'s silence, and the deduction drawn that *he* at anyrate did not consider them "genuine and valuable."

The Third Gospel is evidently a favourite with Dr. Abbott, for he writes: "Every page of it shows signs of pains, literary labour, and good taste. It is by far the most beautiful, picturesque, and pathetic of all the Gospels, and probably the best adapted for making converts, especially among those who have to do with the life of the household. But, if bald bare facts are in question, it is probably the least authoritative of the four."

But it is just the facts which we are at present in search of. Now it is interesting to notice that Marcion (cir. 140-150), the first known critic of Gospel documents (if we except Papias), preferred a Gospel in many things resembling Lk.'s account, but excluding not only his introduction and conclusion but also everything but the year or years of the ministry. Marcion rejected every other Gospel-account as utterly erroneous, including in every probability our Mt., Mk., and Jn. For in our opinion these documents existed in Marcion's time, and it may very well be that their very recent publicity precipitated his sweeping criticism. Marcion's judgment was therefore the exact antithesis of Dr. Abbott's opinion

as to the historicity of Lk. Marcion may of course have been entirely in error; but the main point of interest for the student of history is that the Marcionite view gained an enormous following, perhaps the half of the then Christian world. This fact proves conclusively that at this period there were no really convincing historical facts to which to appeal; it was all, even at this comparatively early date, a question of opinion.

Let us now turn our attention to the Fourth Gospel. In its relation to the Triple Tradition "it will be found that Jn. generally supports a combination of Mk. and Mt., and often Mk. alone, against Lk."; "he very frequently steps in to explain, by modifying, some obscure or harsh statement of Mk. omitted by Lk."

In relation to the Double Tradition, the discourses in Jn. have almost for their sole subject the Father as revealed through the Son, and lie outside the province of the precepts, parables and discourses of Mt.-Lk. For Jn., Jesus is Truth itself, not a teacher of truth as with the Synoptists. Jn. never speaks of "praying," but of "asking" or "requesting." Jn., indeed, voices another tradition entirely.

Jn. in relation to the Mt. and Lk. introductions is negative. He speaks of Jesus, *the son of Joseph*. In relation to the Mt.- and Lk.-conclusions and Mk.-app., in Jn. "proof" is

entirely subordinated to "signs" or spiritual symbolisms. Moreover, "there is a curious contrast between the personal and as it were private nature of Christ's last utterances in Jn., and the public or ecclesiastical utterances recorded by Lk., Mk.-app., and the last verses of Mt." Jn.'s narrative especially emphasises the intimate and private tradition of the formation of a little band of disciples whose instruction and training were one of the prime interests of the Master.

In relation to Mt. and Lk.'s single traditions, if we are to suppose Jn. had them before him, he treats them with the greatest freedom. Dr. Abbott, however, is so convinced that Jn. had our three Synoptics before him, and not only their respective common matter, that he thinks Jn. may be used as "the earliest commentary on the Synoptists." But the relation of Jn. to the Synoptists may be otherwise explained. If the writer of Jn. can in any way possible be called a commentator on the Synoptists, then he has treated their text with a freedom and lack of respect for its authority that has never been equalled by any commentator in the whole course of literature. Dr. Abbott is weak on the Johannine problem precisely because of this commentary presumption.

Turning now to the Fourth Gospel as a single tradition, we first seek for internal evidence as to

authorship. The appendix states that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was the witness and writer of "these *things*," not words, and adds "and *we* know that his witness is true." Who the "we" are remains a mystery. The text of the appendix where it refers to the witness as writer (xx. 24) is uncertain. The words "this is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things" point almost conclusively to the "and wrote these things" as a gloss.

As to the evidence from names, Jn. may be shown "to write mostly from biblical or literary, not from local knowledge." Jn. uses numbers in a symbolic sense, and his "quotations" from the Old Testament are condensed and adapted to the context. Though Jn.'s style is simplicity itself, his method is exceedingly artificial, but quite natural to any one bred amid Jewish and Alexandrian mystic traditions. For instance, "the thought of the perfect 'seven' pervades all Jn.'s highest revelations of the divine glory."

It is also to be noticed that the Fourth Gospel does not contain the Synoptic "repent," "repentance," "forgiveness," "faith," "baptism," "preach," "rebuke," "sinners," "publicans," "disease," "possessed with a devil," "enemy," "hypocrisy," "divorce," "adultery," "woe," "sick," "riches," "mighty work," "parable," "pray."

The Prologue is based on ancient traditions of the Wisdom—the Logos-doctrine. We have always, however, ourselves considered that this was taken bodily from a more ancient writing. Jn. is characterised by the teaching of the spiritual doctrines of the Bridegroom, of the mystic Water and mystic Bread of Life, and especially by the grandiose conception of the Light and the Life. With regard to the greatest of all the miracles, the raising of Lazarus, omitted by all the Synoptists, Dr. Abbott, basing himself on the demonstrable acquaintance of Jn. with Philo's symbolical method (or rather, we would say, with a method of which Philo is *now* the chief known exponent) says: "He might well think himself justified in composing a single symbolical story that might sum up a hundred floating traditions about Christ's revivifying acts in such a form as to point to Him as the Consoler of Israel, and the Resurrection and the Life of the World." For with regard to such miracles in general, Dr. Abbott believes, and we are prepared to go with him far in his belief, that "marvellous cures (and not improbably, revivifications) were wrought by the earliest Christians, as indicated by the Pauline Epistles, by indirect Talmudic testimony, and by early Christian traditions. There are signs, however, of very early exaggeration arising from misunderstood metaphor."



After dealing with the peculiar symbolical views of John as to the Passover and Passion, Dr. Abbott concludes: "Thus, amid mysticism and symbolism, as it began, ends the Johannine life of Christ." Its only historical value, apparently, in his opinion, lies in "correcting impressions derived from the Synoptic Gospels." And here in connection with the term "Life of Christ," which is so freely used on all sides, we would point out that, exclusive of the legendary birth stories and the post-resurrection appearances, which cannot come into the framework of a life-history, there are no materials for a *life* of Jesus, but solely for the short period of the ministry.

So ends Dr. Abbott's analysis of the Gospels in search of the internal evidence they afford as to their nature, date and authorship. The main features of their peculiarities, mutual relationships, and composite nature, have been brought out; and we have seen how little information they afford as to their authorship and date. The whole matter is very gently dealt with, and there is a studied moderation of view. But Dr. Abbott's preliminary analysis is only the breaking of the ice, as we shall see in the sequel. Our next chapter will take up the external evidence as to these four most interesting documents.

## AN EXAMINATION OF THE EARLIEST OUTER EVIDENCE.

TURNING next to the external evidence with regard to the authorship and authority of our four Gospels, the subject may be most conveniently treated under the two headings of (i.) statements and (ii.) quotations or alleged quotations.

(i.) Neither in the genuine Pauline Letters, our earliest historic documents, nor in any other Epistle of the New Testament, nor in the earliest extra-canonical documents traditionally attributed to Clemens Romanus and Barnabas, nor in the Didache, are written Gospels mentioned or implied.

As to the dates of these early extra-canonical documents there is as yet no certainty, and opinion can shift them backwards and forwards in time according as it desires to establish an early or late date for the canonical Gospels. The Letter ascribed to Clement of Rome is generally assigned to about 95 A.D.; the

Letter ascribed to Barnabas *may* be placed anywhere between 70 A.D. and Clement of Alexandria (cir. 195 A.D.), who is the first to mention it, but it is assuredly early; and Bryennius' text of the Didache, or Teaching of the Apostles, is generally assigned to 80-120 A.D., though it is doubtless partly derived from an earlier work.

From the dedication of the Third Gospel, however, we learn, as we have already seen, that there were at that time "many" written Gospels current. Lk. further implies that their diversity "was calculated to obscure 'the certainty concerning the things wherein' the Christian catechumen was instructed," and therefore implies that he at any rate thought little of them, as also was the case with Papias; he further implies that the apostles "delivered" these things—that is, presumably taught them orally, as distinguished from the "many" who wrote and were not apostles. But it is by no means certain that "apostles" did not write as well, whether of the order of the Twelve or of the order of the Seventy. That this diversity and uncertainty, however, was the actual state of affairs is strikingly confirmed by what we have said of the Marcionite movement, which arose about 140-150 A.D. There was at this time no historical certainty in the matter.

We now come to the statements of Papias, a bishop of Phrygian Hierapolis, in the first half of the second century, who wrote in Greek five books called "Exposition(s) of the Lord's Logia." As the statements of Papias are the earliest external evidence as to authorship, and as they are not by any means so confirmatory of later Church tradition as might be expected, they have been subjected to the most searching criticism; every single phrase has been microscopically dissected and the key-words interpreted in very various and contradictory fashions, according to the commentator's point of view.

With regard to the title of the treatise, "exegesis" may mean simply a "setting forth," though it may also include the idea of "interpretation." By "Logia" (Oracles) may be meant simply "Words of the Lord," or they may also include Acts of the Lord; and by "of the Lord," some have even contended, may be meant Old Testament prophetic utterances only, and not the Words of Jesus, but this is a very extreme view.

With regard to these statements of Papias, it should be noted that they are quotations made by Eusebius (cir. 325 A.D.), and that the acceptance of their accuracy depends upon our estimate of this Church Father's trustworthiness. This has been called into question on innumerable

points by hosts of critics ; Dr. Abbott, however, considers him “ a most careful and conscientious writer.” Papias’s work itself has disappeared.

The passages which are supposed by Eusebius to refer to our Mk. and Mt. are as follows (in the translation of Professor Stanton) :

“ Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately—not, however, in order—as many as he remembered of the things either spoken or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor attended on Him, but afterwards, as I said, (attended on) Peter, who used to give his instructions according to what was required, but not as giving an orderly exposition of the Lord’s Words. So that Mark made no mistake in writing down some things as he recalled them. For he paid heed to one point, namely, not to leave out any of the things he had heard, or to say anything false in regard to them.”

“ Matthew, however, wrote the Logia in the Hebrew tongue, and every man interpreted them as he was able,” where “ interpreted ” is generally taken to mean “ translated.”

In the former passage, the translation “ Mark made no mistake ” is rightly rejected by Dr. Abbott ; it can only mean “ committed no fault ”—that is to say, “ Papias is defending Mark against the very natural objection that he did

not do the apostle justice in writing down oral and casual teaching" in a permanent form.

Now as Eusebius promises to record *all* that ecclesiastical writers have said about the canonical scriptures, Papias in all probability said nothing about Lk. and Jn. Did Papias, however, know of these Gospels? This must ever remain a question of opinion; and not only so, but the assumption by Eusebius that Papias refers to *our* Mk. and Mt. is equally a question of opinion, for it is denied by many, for many reasons, and especially on the ground that our Mk. does set things down "in order," though perhaps not in the true chronological order, and that Mt. as a whole is certainly not a translation from Hebrew, whatever its "sources" may be.

Dr. Abbott's opinion is that "Lk. and Jn. were not recognised by Papias as on a level with Mk. and Mt."; it seems, however, almost incredible that if Papias had said a single word of these two Gospels which could have been used for supporting the received view, Eusebius would have refrained from quoting it. Papias either said nothing at all, because he had never heard of them, or he said something so opposed to the received view that Eusebius was compelled to omit it entirely.

In any case the question of the date of Papias becomes one of prime importance. Now the



only important evidence bearing on this subject is again a quotation from Eusebius, who—in rejecting the opinion of Irenæus (at the end of the second century) that Papias was a “hearer of John” the apostle—quotes from the preface of Papias.

Dr. Abbott gives the text only, but Professor Schmiedel, in his article on “John,” gives the following translation (omitting certain intercalated words of a highly debatable nature) :

“But as many things also as I once well learned from the mouths of the elders, and well committed to memory, I shall not hesitate to set down [or commit to writing] for thee, together with the interpretations [appropriate to them], guaranteeing their truth. For I took pleasure not, as the many do, in those who speak much, but in those that teach the things that are true ; nor in those who bring to remembrance the foreign commandments, but in those who bring to remembrance the commandments that were given by the Lord to faith, and have come to us from the truth itself. But if anywhere anyone also should come who had companied with the elders I ascertained the sayings [or words] of the elders \* [as to this]—what Andrew or what Peter had said, or what Philip or what Thomas or

\* That is, what the elders *said* about what Peter and the rest *had said*.

James or what John or Matthew or any other of the disciples of the Lord [had said], and what Aristion and John the elder, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I supposed that the things [to be derived] from books were not of such profit to me as the things [derived] from the living and abiding utterance."

According to his own account, Papias is not only not proved to have been a "hearer" of John the apostle, but not even of Aristion or John the elder. The greatest puzzle is that *contemporaries* of Papias, Aristion and John the elder, are called "disciples of the Lord." This, as Lightfoot says, "involves a chronological difficulty"—a difficulty so great that the only solution Dr. Abbott can suggest is to expunge the words as an interpolation. This is indeed a cutting of the Gordian knot, and will certainly never be accepted by those who see in these words a precious scrap of evidence as to the extended meaning of the term "disciples of the Lord," a term applied not only to those who personally knew Jesus in the flesh, but also to those who stood in some special relation to the Master after his death. And if this was the historical fact, as we hold, it follows not only that Aristion and John the elder were not contemporaries of Jesus, but also that the other "disciples" were also not all necessarily contemporaries.

The curious selection of the names of the disciples by Papias is explained by Dr. Abbott on the hypothesis that there were already in existence writings attributed to these names, writings which Papias did not believe to be really theirs.

This quotation from Papias, however, gives us little evidence as to his date, unless we assume the generally received view as to the meaning of "disciples of the Lord." On the contrary, we are told by Eusebius that Papias flourished in the time of Polycarp (80-166 A.D., according to Eusebius, though many critics prefer 70-156 A.D.). The general consensus of opinion, then, given by Dr. Stanton, assigns the probable date of Papias's work to about 140 A.D.; but Dr. Abbott would make it about 115-130 A.D., while Professor Harnack gives it as 145-160 A.D. It is, however, important to notice that the whole enquiry has so far been based on the assumption that "disciples of the Lord" must mean nothing else than those who had known Jesus in the flesh, whereas we find in the Gnostic so-called Pistis Sophia treatise the "disciples" speaking to Jesus of "Paul our brother," who avowedly only knew the Master after the death of His body.

We next come to the writings of Justin Martyr (cir. 145-149). Justin constantly appeals to

certain documents which he calls generally "Memoirs of the Apostles," and once (if it is not a gloss) Gospels. On the word Memoirs Dr. Abbott writes: "There is a considerable probability that the word was in regular use to denote the Memoirs or Anecdotes *about* the apostles; first 'repeated' by their immediate interpreters or pupils; then committed to writing by some of them in the form of gospels; and lastly, accepted by Justin as Memoirs written *by* the apostles *about* Christ."

As we have a number of quotations cited by Justin from these Memoirs, there has been a fierce war of criticism on the subject, the one side trying to prove Justin's acquaintance with our Gospels, the other denying it. Here, however, we are concerned with statements about these Gospels rather than with quotations, and it must be confessed that in spite of all his industry Dr. Abbott can deduce no satisfactorily clear statement. As to the miraculous conception and other such matters, however, Justin's view is "that Christ after his resurrection '*appeared*' to his apostles and disciples and taught them' everything relating to himself." This reminds us of the exceedingly important statement of Clemens Alexandrinus: "To James the Just and John and Peter was the *Gnosis* delivered by the Lord *after the Resurrection*. These delivered it to the

rest of the apostles, and the rest to the Seventy"—thus preserving the tradition of the gradual development of the inner school from the original ordering into Three, into one of Twelve and subsequently into one of Seventy, and, more important still, the tradition of the continued teaching of the "disciples" and "apostles" after the death of Jesus.

We pass next to the famous Muratorian Fragment, a barbarous Latin translation of some earlier Greek text; its date is purely conjectural, but the original is generally assigned to about 170 A.D. This fragment presumably mentioned all four Gospels, for after a few concluding words relating to another book, it begins by speaking of "the third book of the Gospel—(the book) according to Luke."

Luke is here called a physician, is supposed to have been a follower of Paul, and is said to have written in his own name, and according to his own private judgment (*ex opinione*). As criticism (we shall see further on) has to reject this ascription of our third Gospel to Luke, the subordinate question which here arises is whether or not this statement was born of conflict with the Marcionite claims, for Marcion asserted that his Gospel was based on the Gospel of Paul, while later Church Fathers asserted that it was a "mutilation" of our Lk. Marcion's Gospel appar-

ently treated of the ministry only, beginning, "He went down to Capernaum."

The Muratorian account of the genesis of the Fourth Gospel is, however, far more explicit. This is said to have been written down by a certain John, who was "of the disciples." His "fellow-disciples and his bishops" had apparently urged him to write a Gospel, but John hesitated to accept the responsibility, and proposed that they should all fast together for three days, and tell one another if anything were revealed to them. On the same night it is revealed to Andrew, who is "of the apostles," that while all revised John should write down all things in his own name.

But our Jn. does not write in his own name. Setting this point, however, aside, we are introduced to a circle of people who seek authority in visions. We have disciples, bishops, and an apostle gathered in conclave; and we may even conclude that John, so far from being the highest in rank (or surely he would be also honoured with the title of apostle), is doubtful of his own powers or of his authority to attempt a so important undertaking, and can only be persuaded to do so when the apostle of the company receives a direct revelation on the matter. We shall see the importance of this tradition in the sequel.

Passing next to Irenæus (about 185 A.D.), we come to the first formulation of the generally



received tradition as to the Four. Irenæus would have it that John was the personal disciple of Jesus, and wrote his Gospel at Ephesus. Matthew published his Gospel in Hebrew "while Peter and Paul in Rome were preaching and founding the Church." Mark handed down in writing what Peter used to preach; Luke "set down in a book what Paul was in the habit of preaching." It is hardly necessary to add that it is just the statements of Irenæus which modern scientific research calls into question; with regard to Mt. and Mk. Irenæus evidently based himself on Papias, assuming that that worthy referred to *our* Mt. and Mk.

There is little that will help us in Clement of Alexandria (cir. 195 A.D.) except the statement that the genealogies were written first, that is, before our Mt. and Lk. He, however, hands on a version of the tradition as to John which removes the "stumbling-block" of the fuller and more naïve Muratorian account. For he says: "John, last of all, reflecting that the earthly aspect [lit., the bodily things] had been set forth in the Gospels, at the instigation of his pupils [or it may be his associates], by a special impulse of the spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel." Clement carries on the supposed Papias-tradition of the dependence of Mk. on the Petrine teaching, and so also does Origen.

And here our investigation of external statements as to origin can cease, for, as Dr. Abbott says: "Later writers have no further evidence, and can but exemplify the tendency of tradition, even among honest and able men, to exaggerate or to minimise, in the supposed interests of a good cause."

(ii.) We next come to the important question of quotations which are supposed to prove the existence of our present four Gospels. First, with regard to quotations from books which were written prior to Justin (150 A.D.).

Paul in his Letters, the earliest historical documents of Christendom, quotes nothing that is found in our Gospels. One Saying, it is true, is also found in Mt. and Lk., but this Saying (as well as other Sayings quoted by Paul but not retained in our Gospels) is also found in the ancient document, the Didache. This absolutely astonishing fact has never received any satisfactory explanation. The hypothesis that Paul and the original Didache probably used an antecedent tradition, does not help us to understand why the later Synoptists base themselves on a totally different collection or collections of the Logia.

Similarly, the Epistle of James, which is of an early, though uncertain date, "though permeated with doctrine similar to the Sermon on the

Mount," contains "more and closer parallels" to the Didache and Barnabas. There is nothing to show any knowledge of our actual Gospels.

That, however, there may have been in circulation various collections of the public sayings, differing considerably from one another, is quite credible. Dr. Abbott thinks the new-found Logia of Behnesa (Oxyrhynchus fragment) an example of such an early "manual"; after bringing forward some strong points in favour of their antiquity, he concludes that "these and many other considerations indicate that these Logia are genuine sayings of Jesus, ignored or suppressed because of the 'dangerous' tendency of some of them, and the obscurity of others."

Now of the six decipherable Sayings which this scrap of the by far most ancient MS. of any Christian document known to us contains, only one is familiar to us from the canonical Gospels, two contain new matter and important variants, and three are entirely new. The leaf we possess bears the number 18. So that if we reckon eight Sayings to a leaf (two of the Sayings in our leaf being undecipherable), the collection must have contained at least 144 Sayings; and if the percentage of "new" Sayings to canonically known or partially known Sayings was as high as in the solitary leaf which has reached us, some half of the Sayings-materials has been lost to us, and may

have contained doctrines which would necessitate an entire revision of the general view of original Christian doctrine.

So again with regard to the Letter ascribed to Clement of Rome (about 95 A.D., though some place the date later), the passage cited to prove acquaintance with our Mt. and Lk., when compared with Polycarp and Clement of Alexandria, "shows pretty conclusively that these writers had in mind some other tradition than that of the Synoptists."

The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is a composite document of widely disputed date. It is generally assumed, however, that 80-120 are the *termini*. The only known MS., published by Bryennius in 1883, consists of two parts which differ completely in their contents. We have first of all the "Two Ways," in which no appeal is made to any "Words" or "Gospel." This part is considered by almost all scholars to be the Christian adaptation or overworking of a Jewish teaching of the same name. The latter part appeals to both "Sayings" and a "Gospel." On this point Dr. Abbott flatly contradicts himself. First he says: "The 'Gospel' meant is probably Mt." But "so far as this little book is concerned, the 'Gospel' might consist of a version of the Sermon on the Mount and the Precepts to the Twelve. On the Second

Advent, the writer mentions 'the Signs of Truth' with such apparent independence of Mt. as to make it doubtful whether, in the context, the resemblances to Mt. indicate quotations from Mt."

The Epistle of Barnabas, assigned by the very conservative Lightfoot to 70-79 A.D., but placed by others as late as 119 A.D., shows no acquaintance with the canonical Gospels. The interesting point about this ancient Letter is, according to Dr. Abbott, that Barnabas, or whoever was the writer, "*anticipates*" Jn.

The fragment of The Great Apophysis, or Announcement, attributed by Hippolytus to "Simon Magus," an early Gnostic document, and assigned by Lightfoot to the close of the first century, contains certain phrases which "make it probable that Jn. had Simon in view when he composed his Gospel." But this is the purest assumption.

Ignatius, whose date is given as about 110 A.D., quotes a few short sentences found in our Mt. and once a phrase peculiar to Mk., but there is nothing to show that he quotes directly from our Mt. or Mk.; it is more probable that he is drawing from one or more of their "sources." Dr. Abbott, however, in this uncertainty, takes the conservative position. It is well known, however, that the genuineness even of the Vossian

epistles is still a matter of the greatest uncertainty. If they are genuine their date may lie anywhere between 105 and 117 A.D. If they are forgeries they may date from any time from 150 A.D. to the date of Eusebius (325-330 A.D.).

The short Letter of Polycarp (to which is given by Dr. Abbott the date 110 A.D., but which is part and parcel of the Ignatian controversy) can hardly afford us any grounds of definite conjecture; but in so far as any conclusion can be drawn from it, Dr. Abbott is of opinion that Polycarp knew "the 'Gospel' of Mk. and Mt.," following the same tendency he has already manifested in the question of Ignatius.

With regard to the fragments of Papias the only quotation which can be adduced as bearing on the question, "leads to the inference that Papias is not quoting and misinterpreting Jn.," as is claimed by conservative criticism, "but quoting and interpreting, in accordance with tradition, a Logion of which Jn. gives a *different version*." The Logion was probably originally derived from the Book of Enoch.

The extant fragments of the Gnostic doctor Basilides (117-138 A.D.) afford us no evidence of his recognition of our Gospels as authoritative.

Marcion, about 140, as we have seen, rejected all other Gospels and adopted a Gospel-account in many things resembling our Lk. Dr. Abbott,



though supporting the later Tertullian's charge that Marcion falsified Lk. in favour of his anti-Jewish views, points out, as it has often been pointed out before, "that the omissions and alterations which he (Marcion) would have had to make in Jn. are trifling as compared with those he was forced to introduce into Lk." From this hypothesis Dr. Abbott concludes that "in 125-135 A.D.," the date he assigns to Marcion's Gospel, though this seems to us somewhat too early, "Lk. had come into prominence as a recognised Gospel in Marcion's region, but that Jn. was not yet equally prominent." It is, however, very evident that we are here in the full ocean of hypothesis and conjecture, and can set our feet on no rock of proved historical fact.

From the few acknowledged fragments of Valentinus, the successor of Basilides, we have nothing to show that he recognised our Gospels. This brings us to the middle of the second century, and presumably nowadays all but the absolutely irreconcilables will acknowledge the existence of our Gospels after that date.

We have seen above the leanings of Dr. Abbott in one or two particulars to the conservative position; it is therefore somewhat surprising to find him summing up the quotation evidence before Justin in the following manner: "Thus up to the middle of the second century, though

there are traces of Johannine thought and tradition, and immature approximations to the Johannine Logos-doctrine, yet in some writers (*e.g.*, Barnabas and Simon) we find rather what Jn. develops or what Jn. attacks, than anything which imitates Jn., and in others (*e.g.*, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Papias) mere war cries of the time, or phrases of a Logos-doctrine still in flux, or apocalyptic traditions of which Jn. gives a more spiritual and perhaps a truer version. There is nothing to prove, or even suggest, that Jn. was 'recognised as a gospel.' Many of these writers, however, are known to us by extracts so short and slight that inference from them is very unsafe."

As far as Jn. is concerned this is explicit enough, and we are left with no doubt as to Dr. Abbott's opinion, but why in all this summary is there no definite statement as to Mk., Mt., or Lk.? Why this omission, when it is just the date of the Synoptic writings which are generally considered of the greater importance in this enquiry?

Passing to Justin Martyr, the evidence as to quotations found in his writings (145-149 A.D.) is especially valuable owing to its greater richness. Dr. Abbott concludes that Justin knew the Synoptic writings but not Jn. But the knowledge by Justin of the Synoptics has been hotly contested both because of the great freedom with

which Justin treats the alleged quotations, and also because of several statements he makes on important points which prove conclusively that Justin used other accounts of the nativity and baptism than those in Mt. and Lk. The wide variation also of Justin's quotations from the present text of the Synoptics shows either quotations from memory, or that the original text of the first three Gospels differed very greatly from our present text.

This point was twenty years ago brought out very ably by Canon Scott Holland in his article on Justin Martyr (in Smith and Wace's Dictionary of Christian Biography), when he wrote: "Justin is inexact in his Old Testament quotations, but he is more than three times as inaccurate in his New Testament quotations. It is intensely difficult to estimate the bearings of this inaccuracy, to know how much to discount for free combinations, which Justin uses extensively, how much for lack of memory, how much more were paraphrase; and then to determine, after such discounting, how much evidence remains to show Justin's use of any other Gospel besides our own, by which their language is qualified. Especially is this hard when we have also to extract the possibility [to-day we say certainty] of variant readings of our present texts; and it is interesting to notice that Justin's language has analogies

to the texts that lie round the old Latin version."

It is, however, difficult to believe that Justin did not know at least our Synoptics, for his "pupil" Tatian (150-180 A.D.) not only knew all four Gospels, but composed a Harmony of the Four, placing Jn. on the same level with the rest. It may be that Justin would have nothing to do with Jn. because of its mystical nature, for Justin was a great literalist. But our sole evidence for Tatian's being a "hearer" of Justin is a statement of Irenæus. It is difficult to believe this in face of the fact that Tatian was a Gnostic, and that, too, not only at the end of his life (as Irenæus would have it), for his Apology, which is taken generally to be his earliest work and orthodox, in its Logos-doctrine (chap. v.) is entirely Gnostic. Tatian, a contemporary of Justin, living at Rome with him for years, accepts our four canonical Gospels and works upon them. Tatian used all four Gospels textually in his later work Diatesseron. It is most probable, then, that he first became acquainted with them in Rome, and if so it is equally probable that Justin knew them. The non-mystic Justin, however, rejected Jn. utterly, and used the Synoptics with so little respect for their wording, that many deny he ever saw them. Tatian was a mystic and a Gnostic, and he too used these

writings with little respect for their individual inspiration ; for he thought himself at liberty to try his own hand at combining the material in yet another Gospel. All this goes to show, in the writer's opinion, that our Gospels were of recent origin, the authors were probably still alive, and known at any rate to the inner circles ; Justin may not have known the authors of our documents, but he probably knew the sources of our Gospels as well as they did, and preferred his own writing.

Reviewing, then, the evidence adduced from quotations or alleged quotations, we may conclude with very great safety that all our four Gospels were certainly in circulation after 150. Prior to that date, however, we find nothing to prove the acceptance, or existence even, of Jn., and with regard to the date of the Synoptics we see that the question is very debatable, and that up to at least 110 A.D. there is absolutely nothing definitely to prove their existence ; and even subsequently it is problematical. The conjectured inferior authority of Lk. also rests on such slender evidence that to our mind it is not made out, and therefore its later date than our Mt. and Mk. not established.

The non-recognition of Jn., moreover, seems to us to be governed by doctrinal considerations rather than by lateness of composition. And in

this connection we should not forget that Egyptian tradition places Jn. first among the Gospels. Finally, the conflicting views of critics as to the dates of the Synoptics, based on the testimony of quotations, are chiefly owing to the want of accurate distinction between what would prove the existence of our actual compilations, and what simply points to the existence of one or more of their "sources."

We will next review the present position of the synoptical problem as set forth by Professor Schmiedel.



## THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE SYNOPTICAL PROBLEM.

THE question of "tendency" in the Synoptic writers is of first importance, for, as Professor Schmiedel says, "tendencies of one kind or another" are acknowledged by even the most conservative critics. Especially to be noticed are Mt.'s repeated appeals to Jews to prove from the Old Testament the Messiahship of Jesus, prefaced by the words "in order that it might be fulfilled as it is written." Equally remarkable is the polemic carried on in Mt. against the Scribes and Pharisees; while in Lk., in striking contrast to Mt., many of these speeches are addressed to the people in general. This and numerous other points show that Lk. had Gentile interests in view. But what is the special tendency of Mk.? From the very small number of discourses of Jesus incorporated by Mk., it is concluded that he attaches less importance to the teaching than to the person of Jesus. We would rather say

that the peculiarity of Mk. (or rather of the "embedded" document in Mk.) is the story of a *designed* life—that is to say, a life of dramatic incidents which could be further explained in a mystical and spiritual sense.

Further, "each evangelist in his own way is influenced by, and seeks by his narrative to serve, the apologetic interest"; already much was disputed. Another strong tendency, manifested by all three writers, is the political—"the desire to make the Roman authority as little responsible as possible for the death of Jesus." The Jews are the culprits; this points to a period when the early friendly relationship with Judaism had entirely ceased, and when efforts were being made to placate the Roman authorities—in brief, the period of public apologetic, which presumably did not begin before the second century.

Now, as we have seen in our last chapter, the traditional view regards Lk. as being of a specifically Pauline character, but this "widely accepted view" can be maintained "only in a very limited sense."

It is true that in Lk. we find the rejection of the Jewish nation, but beyond this general position, no distinctly Pauline doctrine; on the other hand, Lk. preserves and favours a distinctly Ebionitic tradition. The poor are blessed simply because of their poverty, the rich condemned

simply because of their riches ; other sayings and parables also breathe the same atmosphere. Now the Ebionim (or Poor Men) were the most ignorant of the earliest Jewish followers of the public teaching, who, it would seem, saw in the Master a sort of socialist leader ; for we cannot really believe that He taught so crude and unmoral a doctrine as here represented. The Ebionim formed one wing of the Judaising party with whom Paul contended. It is therefore exceedingly difficult to understand why, if the writer of Lk. were a follower of Paul, he should have selected part of the most pronounced tradition of the opposing party to incorporate in his Gospel.

But more important than any special tendencies which may be detected in the individual writers, there is to be noticed a common tendency to set forth a document that should serve the interest of a nascent catholicity, that is to say, a view that might be accepted generally.

Passing next to a review of the principal hypotheses which have been put forward as tentative solutions of the synoptical problem, Professor Schmiedel characterises the very simple hypothesis of "a primitive Gospel handed down solely by *oral tradition*"—so that eventually there came to be formed a "fixed type of narrative" in Aramaic, the vernacular tongue of the

contemporaries of Jesus—as an “*asylum ignorantiae*,” contradicting all the facts of criticism, if it be held to account for *all* the facts. In fact, the only serious defender of the hypothesis now left is Wright. Nevertheless the hypothesis of oral tradition, or rather oral traditions, as *one* of the factors to be taken into account, must be held to contain “an essential element of truth.”

The next most simple hypothesis is that of *borrowing*, where we have to “put aside all idea of any other written sources than the canonical, and must keep out of account as far as possible the idea of any oral sources.” Of the six imaginable orders only three continue to be at all seriously argued for even by conservative criticism: Mt., Mk., Lk.; Mk., Mt., Lk.; Mk., Lk., Mt. It is, however, to be remarked “that every assertion, no matter how evident, as to the priority of one evangelist and the posteriority of another in any given passage will be found to have been turned the other way round by quite a number of scholars of repute.”

Summing up the evidence, Professor Schmiedel concludes that “the borrowing hypothesis, unless with the assistance of other assumptions, is unworkable.” The result of this investigation into the labours of criticism on this point seems to us to indicate that the three Synoptic writers were

contemporaries and familiar with one another's design, but did not borrow directly one from another; the "borrowing" was from other written sources of which they made use.

We next come to the hypothesis of a single original *written* Gospel; this is open to the same objection as a single original oral tradition, only that it "explains the agreements in our Gospels better, their divergences in the same proportion worse."

The next hypothesis to be considered is that Mt. and Lk. use an *original* Mk.—that is to say, a Mk. in one and the same form, but different from the one we possess.

It is very evident that Mt. and Lk. do not use *our* Mk., though they use most of the material contained in our Mk.; but we could never understand why this phenomenon could be explained by postulating an original *Mk.* There is certainly in Mk. an "embedded" document; but the embedded document, so far from being an original Mk., is used freely in common by Mt. and Mk. and Lk., and may therefore be said to be equally embedded in all three. Whether this embedded document can be the Mark-gospel of Papias it is impossible to determine. *Our* Mk. is in every probability not Papias's Mk., though the misunderstood statement of Papias probably brought about its christening.

We pass next to the theory of the Logia (spoken of by Papias) as a probable source for Mt. and Lk., that is to say, of the common material (sayings, discourses and parables) used by Mt. and Lk., but not found in Mk. ; for in this they cannot be supposed to borrow from each other, seeing that in addition to general agreement "the passages exhibit quite characteristic divergences."

Now it is first of all quite conjectural whether by Logia Papias meant simply Sayings or Sayings mixed with Acts-narrative. In the second place, although Professor Schmiedel thinks that Papias was acquainted with our canonical Mt., there is, as we have already seen, absolutely no proof of this. On the contrary, Papias's statement as to *his* Matthew makes it as certain as anything can be in this vexed question that it was *not* our Mt., for the Logia-collection of *his* Matthew was a single document and written in Hebrew. It is absolutely certain that our Mt. as it stands was not written in Hebrew, though its main source may probably have been originally written in the classical language of the Jews (Hebrew), or in the vernacular (Aramaic). But upon this point there is a great divergence of critical opinion.

We may, however, interpolate here that in our own view Dr. Abbott, in his *DiatessERICA* (two



volumes of which have already appeared), has made out an exceedingly strong case "that parts of the Synoptic Gospels are based on translations from a Hebrew document." This does not touch the Logia-source in our Mt., but it does raise the question as to whether the "common document" of the Triple Tradition may possibly have been Papias's Matthew-Logia; it is not very probable, but it may be possibly argued.

Indeed in this connection nothing can be definitely proved as to Papias's Matthew-Logia; all that is stated at present is that demonstrably there was another source common to Mt. and Lk. besides the source common to all three Synoptists. This so-called theory of two sources, we are told, "ranks among those results of Gospel-criticism which have met with most general acceptance."

But the more advanced critics are not satisfied with the assumption of only one source for the matter common to Mt. and Lk. but absent in Mk., for the divergences between them are so great, that if there were only one source, then one or other of these evangelists, or both, must have treated the source with "drastic freedom." This is especially evidenced by the Ebionitic tinge of the Logia in Lk. A close consideration of this phenomenon leads to the conclusion that

other sources, at any rate as far as Lk. is concerned, have to be postulated.

Moreover, the "original Mk." or the "embedded document" theory no longer stands in its original simplicity; for sources are being searched for in this and not without success, and the belief is fast gaining ground that in Mt. xxiv., Mk. xiii., and Lk. xxi., for instance, there are the remains of an ancient fragment of an apocalyptic character. The passage is quite alien from Jesus' teaching as recorded elsewhere, but closely related to other apocalypses of the time. "It will, accordingly, not be unsafe to assume that an apocalypse which originally had a separate existence has here been put into the mouth of Jesus." This fragment is known to criticism as the "Little Apocalypse."

Other minor sources, also, have been conjectured, of which we may specially mention Scholten's so-called anonymous Gospel found in certain passages of Mt. and Lk., and the book which is held by some to be cited by Lk. under the title of "Wisdom."

The parallels also adduced by Seydel from the life of the Buddha "are in many places very striking, at least so far as the story of the childhood of Jesus is concerned, and his proof that the Buddhistic sources are older than the Christian must be regarded as irrefragable." We

do not, however, believe that in this matter there was necessarily any outward borrowing or use of any written or oral sources, but that the outer similarities were produced most probably from *inner* causes.

Nevertheless, we are quite ready to modify our opinion if the cumulative indirect evidence becomes strong enough, for of direct evidence we have little, if any, that is satisfactory, as may be seen from the discussion of the question of the possible influence of Indian thought on Greece in my recent essay on Apollonius of Tyana, the Philosopher-Reformer of the First Century A.D. In this connection, however, we cannot do better than quote from the articles of Dr. Estlin Carpenter, to which we have already referred. Speaking of the close relationship between Buddhism and Christianity, the Vice-President of Manchester College, Oxford, writes (see *The Enquirer*, June 2, 1900):

“The study of Buddhism, when its full significance is seriously grasped, cannot fail to have a profound influence on our conceptions of Christianity. Five hundred years before our era the Teacher passed to and fro in the Ganges valley, proclaiming a way of life which would deliver men from the bondage of sin. Within a hundred and fifty years of his death the traditions about him appear to be substantially

complete. He is miraculously conceived, and wondrously born. On his name day a venerable Brāhman predicts his future greatness. As he steps forth on his great quest of truth, the god of enjoyment tempts him from his search by a promise of imperial sovereignty. He preaches the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness, and sends forth his disciples two and two to carry his message among all classes of men. He, too, is a sower of the word. He, too, can tell of a treasure hidden in the field. He, too, can heal the sick, and feed five hundred brethren at once from a small basket of cakes. A disciple on his way to hear him finds that in the absence of a boat he can walk across the surface of a river; in the middle the waves affright him, and he begins to sink; but he makes his act of joyful confidence in the Buddha firm, and proceeds securely to the other side. He is transfigured within three months of his death, which he predicts. And he does all this *as a man*. Early Buddhism is really a system of ethical culture; and the conception entertained of its founder is strictly humanitarian. But by-and-by a change takes place. The details of the process are still obscure, though the general results are sufficiently clear.

“By the aid of a theory which assumes the form of a kind of Messianic hope in the Pāli

texts, he is identified with a being who appears in the schools of spiritual philosophy as the Self-existent, the Absolute, the Eternal. The historical Gotama, who was supposed to have passed out of existence altogether, who was never an object of worship, but only of devoted commemoration, is now regarded, four centuries after his death, as a temporary manifestation in an earthly form of the Infinite and Everlasting. He is accessible at all times to his disciples, and the purpose of his self-revelation is that they may become partakers of his divine nature. Adoration is directed to him; by prayer, by study of the scriptures, by meditation in holy places, the devout Buddhist enters into living communion with his heavenly Lord; and the different experiences of the Evangelical and the Catholic Christian are reproduced in similar types *sub specie Buddhæ*."

But to return to our more immediate problem; "the synoptical problem is so complicated, that but few students, if any, will now be found who believe a solution possible by means of any one of the hypotheses described above, without other aids. The need for *combining* several of them is felt more and more." Professor Schmiedel then proceeds to give some interesting "graphic representations," or diagrams, of some of these combinations which are not too complicated, as

put forward by some of the best known critics, and then proceeds to test their sufficiency to explain the problem, finding that they all break down on some points.

He then proceeds to an investigation of the very complicated subject of "sources of sources." This investigation points to so many new phenomena to be taken into consideration, that it practically puts out of court most of the simpler hypotheses as to origin hitherto put forward, and leads to far-reaching consequences. We cannot, therefore, do better than append some of the most striking inferences which Professor Schmiedel draws from the present position of advanced Gospel-criticism :

"The first impression one derives from the new situation created is, that by it the solution of the synoptical problem, which appeared after so much toil to have been brought so near, seems suddenly removed to an immeasurable distance. For science, however, it is not altogether amiss, if from time to time it is compelled to dispense with the lights it had previously considered clear enough, and to accustom itself to a new investigation of its objects in the dark. Possibly it may then find that it has got rid of certain false appearances under which things had formerly been viewed. In this particular instance it finds itself no longer under com-



pulsion to assign a given passage to no other source than either the Logia, or to original Mk., or to some other of the few sources with which it had hitherto been accustomed to deal. The great danger of any hypothesis lies in this, that it sets up a number of quite general propositions on the basis of a limited number of observations, and then has to find these propositions justified, come what may.

“On the other hand, signs have for some considerable time not been wanting that scholars were on the way to recognition of the new situation just described”—as, for instance, the hypothesis of a Proto-, Deutero-, Trito-Mk., and the like. And even those critics who are satisfied with the simpler hypotheses have to reckon with the probability “that writings like original Mk., or the Logia, whether in the course of transcription, or at the hands of individual owners, may have received additions or alterations whenever any one believed himself to be acquainted with a better tradition upon any point. The possibility is taken into account, in like manner, that canonical Mk. in particular does not lie before us in the form in which it lay before those who came immediately after him; possible corruptions of the text, glosses and the like, have to be considered. Another element in the reckoning is that already

our oldest MSS. of the Gospels have latent in them many examples of transference from the text of one Gospel into that of another, examples similar to those which we can quite distinctly observe in many instances when the T.R. [our present received text] is confronted with these same witnesses. . . .

“Lastly, scholars are beginning to remember that the evangelists did not need to draw their material from books alone.” There was a large mass of oral tradition and legend floating about which they could each utilise according to their pleasure. From this most interesting and instructive sketch of the present position of the synoptical problem we pass to the consideration of the credibility of the Synoptists.

## THE CREDIBILITY OF THE SYNOPTISTS.

At the outset Professor Schmiedel laments the unscientific way in which this question is for the most part handled. "Thus, many still think themselves entitled to accept as historically true everything written in the Gospels which cannot be shown by explicit testimony to be false. Others pay deference at least to the opinion that a narrative gains in credibility if found in all three Gospels (as if in such a case all were not drawing from one source); and with very few exceptions all critics fall into the very grave error of immediately accepting a thing as true as soon as they have found themselves able to trace it to a 'source.'"

From such fallacies we have to free ourselves at the outset of any independent historical investigation. Two opposite points of view should guide us in treating the leading points in the Synoptic Gospels. "On the one hand, we must set on one side everything which for any reason,

arising either from the substance or from literary criticism, has to be regarded as doubtful or wrong; on the other hand, one must make search for all such data as, from the nature of their contents, cannot possibly on any account be regarded as inventions."

According to this canon of judgment the two great facts that we are bound to recognise are that Jesus had compassion on the multitude and taught with authority.

On the other hand, the chronological framework "must be classed among the most untrustworthy elements in the Gospels"; nor is the case any better with the order of the narratives.

Again, "the alleged situations in which the recorded utterances of Jesus were spoken can by no means be implicitly accepted."

As to places, "in the case of an eye-witness the recollection of an event associates itself readily with that of a definite place"; this is not borne out by our Gospels. As for persons, "neither the names of the women at the cross, nor the names of the twelve disciples, are given in two places alike."

Again, "several of the reported sayings of Jesus clearly bear the impress of a time he did not live to see."

As to the important question of miracles, even

the stoutest believer in miracle must have some doubt as to the accuracy of the accounts. After adducing the evidence, as he does in every case for every one of his assertions, Professor Schmiedel writes: "Taken as a whole, the facts brought forward in the immediately preceding paragraphs show only too clearly with what lack of concern for historical precision the evangelists write. The conclusion is inevitable that even the one evangelist whose story in any particular case involves less of the supernatural than that of the others, is still very far from being entitled on that account to claim implicit acceptance of his narrative. Just in the same degree in which those who came after him have gone beyond him, it is easily conceivable that he himself may have gone beyond those who went before him."

As to the very contradictory accounts of the resurrection, the controlling view of the whole matter is the fact "that in no description of any appearances of the risen Lord did Paul perceive anything by which they were distinguished from his own, received at Damascus." As to the conclusion of Mk. xvi. 9-20, it is admittedly not genuine, and should it be found that, according to the lately discovered Armenian superscription to this appendix (ascribing it to a certain Ariston), it was written by Aristion, "a very unfavourable

light would be thrown on this 'disciple of the Lord,'” as Papias calls him.

We come next to what Professor Schmiedel considers absolutely credible passages as to Jesus.

There are five passages from the sayings-material and general narratives, and four referring to the wonder-doings, which the Professor takes as his “foundation pillars for a truly scientific life” of Jesus!

The first five are as follows: “Why callest thou me good? none is good save God only”; that blasphemy against the “son of man” can be forgiven; that his relatives held him to be beside himself; “Of that day and of that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son but the Father”; and “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Professor Schmiedel thinks that these passages prove “not only that in the person of Jesus we have to do with a completely human being, and that the divine is to be sought in him only in the form in which it is capable of being found in man; they also prove that he really did exist, and that the Gospels contain some absolutely trustworthy facts concerning him.” And with regard to this striking pronouncement, which entirely surrenders what has been hitherto regarded as the central stronghold of theological Christianity, it may be noted that nowhere in



the whole Encyclopædia are the honorific capitals used in pronouns referring to Jesus.

The four selected passages from the miracle-narratives are as follows: Jesus emphatically refused to work a "sign" before the eyes of his contemporaries; Jesus was able to do no mighty work (save healing a few sick folk) in Nazareth, and marvelled at the unbelief of the people; the feeding of the 4000 and 5000 is to be interpreted spiritually, for Jesus refers to this in a rebuke to the disciples concerning their little understanding ("How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning *bread?*"); so also in the answer to the Baptist that "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the *poor have the Gospel preached to them,*" the same spiritual sense is implied—it is the spiritually blind and lame who are healed by the Gospel.

On these selected passages Professor Schmiedel bases his estimate of Jesus; but if we are not content with so limited a view of miracle-possibility, and would accept wonders of healing as well, then "it is permissible for us to regard as historical only those of the class which even at the present day physicians are able to effect by physical methods—as, more especially, cures of mental maladies."

But even if we grant (as we are quite willing

to do) that the origin of some miraculous narratives is to be traced to figurative speech and of others to the influence of Old Testament prophetic passages, we are no more prepared to seek their whole origin in misunderstood metaphor or interpretations of prophecy than to call mythology merely a disease of language. Nor are we prepared to admit Professor Schmiedel's selection of test-passages as the "foundation-pillars of a truly *scientific* life" of Jesus, unless by "scientific" we are to understand solely the present limited field of scientific research, which notoriously has nothing to tell us of the soul and its possibilities. But it is just the facts of the soul (its nature and powers) which constitute the facts of religion, and which alone can throw any real light on the inner side of the origins, or explain the standpoint of the writers of the Gospels. It is here, then, that the rationalists of the higher criticism break down; they are invaluable in their own domain, but their science is as yet utterly incapable of explaining the inner side—the most important side—of the evolution of Christianity.

Professor Schmiedel applies his view of Jesus also as a test of the Sayings, and after pointing out the historical and critical difficulties which surround every other class of Sayings, continues: "It is when the purely religious-ethical

utterances of Jesus come under consideration that we are most advantageously placed. Here especially applies the maxim that we may accept as credible everything that harmonises with the idea of Jesus which has been derived from what we have called the 'foundation pillars' and is not otherwise open to fatal objection."

It must be confessed that this is a poor result of all our investigations, to reduce the grandiose conception of the Master to such *bourgeois* proportions. It is almost as paltry as the "*cher maître*" of Renan. Still this is the general tone of mind of the present rationalistic critic, and so long as he will look at the "facts about religion" solely through the eyes of modern scientific limitations, so long will he exclude many of the most important "facts of religion."

But to return to the safer ground of a further consideration of the authors and dates of the Synoptic writings and their most important sources. Professor Schmiedel is of the opinion that it was not till the middle of the second century that the word "Gospel" came to mean a book. Linguistically considered, the traditional titles "Gospel according to Matthew," etc., so far from meaning "the written gospel of Matthew" (or still less the "written gospel based on communications by Matthew"), mean simply "Gospel history in the form in which

Matthew put it into writing," etc. The original writings bore no superscription at all.

Reviewing the evidence as to the attribution of the substance of the Lk. document to Paul, Professor Schmiedel comes to the conclusion that "it is only an expedient which the Church Fathers adopted to enable them to assign a quasi-apostolic origin to the work of one who was not himself an apostle."

Equally so suspicion attaches to the statement that the Gospel of Mk. rested on communications of Peter. "In short, all that can be said to be certain is this, that it is in vain to look to the Church Fathers for trustworthy information on the subject of the origin of the Gospels."

Moreover, as to whether the Mark of Papias was the author of "original Mk.," or, rather, the common document, this is a pure matter of opinion, for we do not possess original Mk. "Should original Mk. have been written in Aramaic, then the author cannot be held to be the author of canonical Mk." But we may suggest again that there is a probability that the original common document in Mt., Mk. and Lk. may have been written in Hebrew, and not Aramaic, and this irrespective of the question of *its* sources; but even so, Papias's Mark cannot possibly be the author of this common document.

As to the First Gospel, the authorship of the

apostle Matthew "must be given up" for many weighty reasons. "All the more strenuously is the effort made to preserve for Matthew" the authorship of the Logia. But even here there are many difficulties to contend with, as we have seen before.

As to dates. Certain passages strongly tend to establish an early date for the Logia (the second main source) as found in Mt. By early date is meant prior to 70 A.D. (the destruction of Jerusalem), the only means we have at all of establishing a criterion. But even this claim for the early date of certain Logia as preserved by Mt. cannot be definitely established.

With regard to the story of the Magi, a Syriac writing ascribed to Eusebius of Cæsarea "makes the statement, which can hardly have been invented, that this narrative, committed to writing in the interior of Persia, was in 119 A.D., during the episcopate of Xystus of Rome, made search for, discovered and written in the language of those who were interested in it (that is to say, in Greek)." Those who would assign an earlier date to Mt. than 119 A.D. accordingly suppose the late addition of an "appendix" referring to the Magi. But the simplest hypothesis, we should think, and the most natural one, is to make 119 A.D. the *terminus a quo* (or earliest limit) of canonical Mt.

With regard to canonical Mk. we have no data whatever for fixing its date, except the deduction from the contradictory results of critical research on the borrowing-hypothesis, which to our mind clearly indicate that the Synoptic writers were contemporaries.

As it is "quite certain" that the author of Lk. was also the author of Acts, and as the author of Acts "cannot have been Luke, the companion of Paul," Luke cannot have been the author of the Third Gospel. Dr. Stanton, it may be remarked, argues the exact opposite of this. The writer agrees with Professor Schmiedel.

Now, the author of Lk. is shown to have been acquainted with the writings of Josephus, and this would assign the superior limit, *terminus a quo*, or earliest possible date of Lk., to 100 A.D. There is, however, nothing certain in all this. In brief, in our opinion, the moderate opinion that all three Synoptics were written somewhere in the reign of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), seems to be the safest conclusion.

Now, it is generally assumed that the credibility of the Gospels would be increased if they could be shown to have been written at an earlier date, but this is a mistake. "Uncertainty on the chronological question by no means carries with it any uncertainty in the judgment we are to form of the Gospels themselves. . . . Indeed,



even if our Gospels could be shown to have been written from 50 A.D. onwards, or even earlier, we should not be under any necessity to withdraw our conclusions as to their contents; we should, on the contrary, only have to say that the indubitable transformation in the original traditions had taken place much more rapidly than we might have been ready to suppose."

Thus does Professor Schmiedel shatter the hopes of those who imagine that because Professor Harnack has recently modified his opinion on some points of hypothetical document chronology, all the old positions are restored to them intact!

Our next chapter will be devoted to the Fourth Gospel.

## THE JOHANNINE PROBLEM.

THE whole tradition of the apostle John's residence at Ephesus is based on the assertions of Irenæus, who thus endeavours to establish his claim that he (Irenæus) was, through Polycarp, in direct contact with an apostolic tradition. In his very early youth, says Irenæus, he had known the aged Polycarp, who, he claims, had been a direct disciple of the apostolic John. This latter assertion of Irenæus is called into serious question by many, and it is claimed that Irenæus has confounded John the apostle with John the elder.

Turning to the evidence of Papias (about 140 A.D., or, as Harnack would have it, 145–160 A.D.), we are confronted with the enormous difficulty of his assertion that at this time two “disciples of the Lord,” Aristion and John the elder, were alive, and this, too, following his reference to another John, a “disciple of the Lord,” mentioned in a list with other well-known names of apostles who had passed away.

We have seen that the only way out of the difficulty which Dr. Abbott can suggest is to expunge the words "disciples of the Lord" after the names of Aristion and John the elder; how does Professor Schmiedel, in his article on "John," overcome this difficulty? Papias distinctly says that his interest was to hear from the followers of the elders what they could tell him of what the elders had said about what certain "disciples of the Lord" had said. These "disciples of the Lord" were dead, and Papias did not think much of either what was stated about them in books, or what certain writers declared they said. Papias believed that he would better get at the truth of the matter by direct oral tradition. This in addition also to what he had already gleaned in early life directly from certain other elders. But there was an additional confirmation of the nature of the "commandments given by the Lord to faith," for these same elders who had formerly known certain "disciples of the Lord" who had passed away, also knew of certain living "disciples of the Lord," namely, Aristion and John the elder. Now, in this connection "elder" cannot refer to age, but must refer to office. The second John is an elder, but further and beyond that he is distinguished as also being a "disciple of the Lord." In our opinion, as we have already said,

this term signifies a grade, and marks out this John as enjoying the direct inspiration of the Master "*after His death*"; and this irrespective of any limit of time based on the assertions of the evangelists in their conclusions.

How does Professor Schmiedel overcome this difficulty? Of the phrase "disciples of the Lord," he writes: "This expression has been used immediately before, in the stricter sense, of the apostles; in the case of Aristion and John the elder, it is clearly used in a somewhat wider meaning, yet by no means so widely as in Acts ix. 1, where all Christians are so called [a point that is in no way so certain, and might be argued at length] for in that case it would be quite superfluous here. A personal yet not long-continued acquaintance with Jesus, therefore, will be what is meant. Such acquaintance would seem to be excluded if Papias as late as 140 or 145-160 A.D. had spoken with both." Professor Schmiedel, however, thinks that Papias's words refer to an earlier time than the period when he wrote his book; but even so, we shall have to reckon with the new evidence that Aristion is perhaps the writer of the appendix to our canonical Mk., in which case the date leans forward again. Again, Professor Schmiedel's assumption that Papias knew Aristion and John the elder personally, is based on a translation of

the text peculiar to himself, and out of keeping with the construction of the sentence. Otherwise, as he well sees, there are *two* intermediate links between John the elder and the apostles. We ourselves prefer the straightforward meaning of Papias and the extended meaning of the term "disciples of the Lord."

Now Papias, in a fragment preserved by late writers, asserts that John the apostle suffered martyrdom, "was put death by the Jews," whereas the "John" of Irenæus is said to have died of old age at Ephesus. Irenæus, of course, would have it that this Ephesian John was the apostle; but no other ecclesiastical writer of the second century knows anything of the residence of the apostle at Ephesus. In the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, it is "presupposed" that John is not to die a martyr's death, whereas the Gnostic Heracleon, about 175 A.D., confirms the martyrdom of John the apostle.

How, then, are these contradictory assertions to be reconciled and the "gross carelessness on the part of the leading authorities for ecclesiastical tradition" to be excused? As we have already seen from Papias, there were two Johns, the apostle and the elder, both "disciples of the Lord." John the elder may have resided at Ephesus. These two Johns have been confused together in the most unhistorical fashion by

those who sought for an apostolic origin for the Fourth Gospel.

Now, in the New Testament there are no less than five documents officially ascribed to the authorship of the apostle John. Of these five two only need engage our attention in the present enquiry. It is claimed by tradition that the apostle John wrote both the Fourth Gospel and also the Apocalypse. On the other hand, no book of the New Testament has suffered such vicissitudes of acceptance and rejection by the Church as the Apocalypse; from the earliest times doubt was cast on its apostolic origin. But not only this, the differences of style between this document and the Fourth Gospel are so plainly apparent that even the most uninstructed reader can detect them freely with the most superficial inspection.

In considering the authorship of the Apocalypse we must first of all proceed on the assumption that the book is a unity. "The spirit of the whole book can be urged as an argument for the apostle's authorship," on the ground that it is in entire keeping with the Synoptic description of the "son of thunder." Its eschatological contents, Jewish-Christian character, its "violent irreconcilable hostility" to enemies without and false teachers within, its fiery prophetic utterances, all testify to the



justice of this by-name; still the writer does not call himself an apostle, but only a minister of Christ.

On the other hand, the technical erudition and skilful arrangement of the writer are hardly consistent with the Synoptic description of John as a poor fisherman, and with the Acts' designation of him as "an unlearned and ignorant man." Above all we should expect "a livelier image of the personality of Christ" from an eye-witness. And finally, the Apocalypse speaks of the twelve in "a quite objective way," without the slightest hint that the writer is one of the twelve. These difficulties are lessened, however, if we assume that John the elder was the author and not John the apostle.

But even so we are not out of the wood, for it is no longer possible to hold that the Apocalypse is a unity, and critical research has demonstrated that it is in its simplest analysis a Jewish apocalypse over-written by a Christian hand. The question thus becomes far more complicated: Was the apostle or the elder the over-writer or original author of any part of it? The only hypothesis that can hold water in this connection is the *possible* authorship of John the elder of the Letters to the Seven Churches.

After reviewing the radical differences of language and spheres of thought of the two

documents under discussion, the Apocalypse and Fourth Gospel, Professor Schmiedel concludes: "The attempt even to carry the Gospel and the Apocalypse back to one and the same circle or one and the same school . . . . is therefore a bold one. It will be much more correct to say that the author of the Gospel was acquainted with the Apocalypse and took help from it so far as was compatible with the fundamental differences in their points of view. On account of the dependence thus indicated it will be safe to assume that the Apocalypse was a valued book in the circles in which the author of the Gospel moved, and that he arose in that environment and atmosphere."

To this we cannot altogether agree; it may be that the Apocalypse was a valued book in the circle of the writer of the Gospel because of its apocalyptic character, but it is manifestly certain that the writer of the Fourth Gospel did not arise in the intolerant and unloving "environment and atmosphere" of the compiler and over-writer of the Revelation. As to the apostolic authorship of the Gospel, Professor Schmiedel, as do now the majority of critics, rejects it absolutely.

Turning next to the Fourth Gospel itself, the method of enquiry adopted by scientific research centres itself now chiefly upon the question of this Gospel's historicity. "In proportion as

tradition concerning the authorship is uncertain, must we rely all the more upon this means of arriving at knowledge." The most important line of research is that of comparison with the three Synoptic writings, but here it has to be remembered that we must not begin by postulating a higher degree of historicity for the Synoptists; all we can legitimately do is to discover the differences, and then ascertain which is the more preferable account, and finally enquire whether the less preferable can have come from an eye-witness.

To take the fundamental differences in order. The powerful personality of the Baptist in the Synoptics in Jn. becomes a mere "subsidiary figure introduced to make known the majesty of Jesus." The scene of the public ministry of Jesus in Jn. is very different from the Synoptic account; equally so is the order of the principal events in the public life. The miracle-narratives in Jn. are "essentially enhanced" beyond those of the Synoptics, and Jn. adds new and more astonishing narratives; moreover, Jn.'s miracles can always be more easily explained symbolically. But perhaps the most important difference of all is that relating to the date of the crucifixion; moreover, Jn. does not mention the celebration of the last supper, but preaches the mystical doctrine that the Christian "passover"

was the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Further, "the difference in character between the Synoptic and the Johannine discourses of Jesus can hardly be over-estimated." As to Jn.'s representation of Jesus, it is always in harmony with the "utterances of the Johannine Christ," that he is the Logos of God. Nothing that would savour of an earthly origin or nature is recorded of Jesus. The author of the Fourth Gospel preaches the universality of salvation, spiritualises the eschatology and the "second advent." The sayings of Jesus regarding himself assert his pre-existence from all eternity, and that he is the only Way and only Son of the Father ; in brief, he is identified with the Logos of the prologue.

This prologue Professor Schmiedel assumes to be written by the author of the rest of the work ; but we are of opinion that it is from some other hand, and not only so but specially selected as an appropriate introduction, if not as a text upon which the leading doctrinal ideas of the Gospel are based. And this may explain the following contradictory views of the critics, for Professor Schmiedel writes : "One might suppose it to be self-evident that the evangelist in his prologue had the intention of propounding the fundamental thoughts which he was about to develop in the subsequent course of the Gospel." Whereas Professor Harnack's opinion is "that the prologue

is not the expression of the evangelist's own view, but is designed merely to produce a favourable prepossession on behalf of the book in the minds of educated readers."

Now it is to be noticed that there is no positive teaching in the Gospels, or in the New Testament generally, as to the origin of things except in this proem. It is further to be noticed that just as the later followers of Plato specially singled out the *Timæus* for study and commentary, so did the most philosophical among the Christians (for instance, the Gnostics of the second half of the second century) single out this proem for commentary. The *Timæus* is evidently based on and compiled from fragments of more ancient writings, and we are of opinion that this also is the case with the proem of the Fourth Gospel.

But when Professor Schmiedel writes: "The perception that the prologue is deliberately intended as a preparation for the entire contents of the Gospel, has reached its ultimate logical result in the proposition that the entire Gospel is a conception at the root of which lies neither history nor even tradition of another kind, but solely the ideas of the prologue," we are not quite certain that this is altogether the case. We rather hold that the prologue by itself was not the basis of the Gospel, but that the author was brought up in an atmosphere in which such ideas

as those contained in the prologue were current, and that the prologue itself is a scrap of a lost document. We hold, further, that there was a distinct tradition of these ideas differing considerably from the Synoptic tradition, though at the same time we do not deny the personal inspiration of the writer of the Fourth Gospel and his independent treatment of both the outer and inner traditions. This does not of course assume the historicity of the "Johannine tradition," but it assumes a mystical tradition of not only equal authority with the outer traditions, but of greater authority, in the mind of the writer of the "Johannine" document, than the view of the Synoptists.

Professor Schmiedel, in summing up the comparison of Jn. with the Synoptics, writes: "We shall be safe in asserting not only that the Synoptists cannot have been acquainted with the Fourth Gospel, but also that they were not aware of the existence of other sources, written or oral, containing all these divergences from their own account which are exhibited in this Gospel." This seems to be the correct conclusion from the evidence; at the same time it must be remarked that though the writer of the Fourth Gospel was acquainted with the main materials used by the three Synoptists, and treated them with the greatest freedom, and though the Synoptists seem



to have known nothing of the written or oral traditions used exclusively by Jn., that all this does not necessarily exclude their being contemporary writers.

As to the internal evidence for the nationality of the evangelist, "his attitude—partly of acceptance, partly of rejection—towards the O.T.," and his "defective acquaintance with the conditions in Palestine in the time of Jesus," lead to the conclusion "that he was by birth a Jew of the Dispersion or the son of Christian parents who had been Jews of the Dispersion." It has, however, been strongly argued that the writer could not possibly have been a Jew.

Now as the formal conclusion of the Fourth Gospel is to be found at the end of chap. xx., chap. xxi. is "beyond question" an appendix, and moreover can be clearly proved not to have come from the same author as the writer of the rest of the book. The main purpose of the second half of this appendix is the "accrediting" of the document—a fact which shows either that the authorship and contents were already called into question, or were thought likely to be called into question.

The authors of this appendix asserted that it was a certain disciple whom Jesus loved who had written "these things," and that they (the authors) know that his "testimony" is true, but,

as we have already seen, the reading is called into serious question.

The Gospel writer's own account of the witness is that "he who saw it bare record and his record is true; and *that one* knows that he speaks true." The greatest possible ingenuity has been exhausted on these words so as to make them a statement of the writer concerning himself, but this is manifestly an impossibility. Finally, in the supposed other testimony as to himself the designation of the unnamed disciple as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," speaks "quite decisively" against this assumption. In all of this, therefore, we have no certain fact as to authorship from internal evidence.

Passing next to the external evidence for the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel, Professor Schmiedel has of course to traverse the same ground which we have already reviewed in referring to Dr. Abbott's labours. This he does in a very full and scholarly manner, and in summing up his estimate of the evidence writes: "We find ourselves compelled not only to recognise the justice of the remark of Reuss that 'the incredible trouble which has been taken to collect external evidences only serves to show that there are none of the sort which were really wanted,' but also to set it up even as a fundamental principle of criticism that the pro-

duction of the Fourth Gospel must be assigned to the shortest possible date before the time at which traces of acquaintance with it begin to appear. Distinct declarations as to its genuineness begin certainly not earlier than about 170 A.D."

It is quite true that nothing can be definitely proved beyond this; but, as we have already indicated, we are inclined to assign as early a date to the Fourth Gospel as to the Synoptics, and attribute its later recognition, as compared with that of the Synoptics, to the difficulty which the general mind always experiences in assimilating mystical and spiritual doctrine.

"If," however, "on independent grounds some period shortly before 140 A.D. can be set down as the approximate date of the production of the Gospel," then new importance is to be attached to a passage (v. 43) where Jesus is made to say: "I am come in the name of my father and ye receive me not; if another will come in his own name, him will ye receive." This is to be taken as a prophecy after the event, as is the case in thousands of instances in contemporary apocalyptic literature. Barchokba, claiming to be the Messiah, headed a revolt of the Jews in 132 A.D., which ended in the complete extinction of the Jewish state in 135 A.D.

Furthermore, in reviewing the nature of the

external evidence as to the Gospels, Professor Schmiedel gives a valuable warning to those who have to decide between the conservative and independent views on the matter. After citing a number of declarations of the Church Fathers (with regard to other writings) which are admitted by both sides to be fantastic or erroneous, he writes: "When the Church Fathers bring before us such statements as these, no one believes them; but when they 'attest' the genuineness of a book of the Bible, then the conservative theologians regard the fact as enough to silence all criticism. This cannot go on for ever. Instead of the constantly repeated formula that an ancient writing is 'attested' *as early as* by (let us say) Irenæus, Tertullian, or Clement of Alexandria, there will have to be substituted the much more modest statement that its existence (not genuineness) is attested only *as late as* by the writers named, and even this only if the quotations are undeniable or the title expressly mentioned."

After this declaration it is strange to find the learned critic adopting the statement of one of these Church Fathers on a most debatable point without the slightest hesitation.

We have already seen the strong mystical bias of the writer of the Fourth Gospel, and we naturally turn to Professor Schmiedel's ex-

position to learn his opinion on the relation of this Gospel to Gnosticism. He admits that "the Gospel shows clearly how profoundly Gnostic ideas had influenced the author"; but on this very important subject Professor Schmiedel has no light to offer. He seems to accept the entirely polemical assertion of Hegesippus, the contemporary of Irenæus, as handed on by Eusebius, that "profound peace reigned in the entire Church till the reign of Trajan [98-117 A.D.]; but after the second choir of the apostles had died out and the immediate hearers of Christ had passed away, the godless corruption began through the deception of false teachers, who now with unabashed countenance dared to set up against the preaching of truth the doctrines of Gnosis, falsely so called." And he adds: "There is no reason for disputing the date here given."

On the contrary, there is every possible reason for disputing not only the date, but every single item of these polemical statements, as we have shown at great length in our recent work on the subject. It is, however, interesting to notice that, according to Hegesippus, already by 98-117 not only the first but the second choir of the apostles had died out. This is additional evidence against the "John the apostle" theory of Irenæus.

As to the place of composition of the Fourth Gospel, Professor Schmiedel inclines to Asia Minor, as the easiest hypothesis; it is only on this assumption that we can explain how the Gospel could be ascribed to some John living there. But the strongly Alexandrian ideas of the Gospel are, in our opinion, somewhat against this, though of course Gnostic ideas, or Alexandrian, or whatever you choose to call the mystic tradition, could be current in Asia Minor. There is, however, nothing to prevent us referring the origin to an Alexandrian circle, and the carrying of an early copy of the document to Asia Minor.

But before leaving the subject it should be mentioned that the criticism of the Fourth Gospel, which has so far proceeded on the assumption of its unity (excepting, of course, the appendix and the prologue), is further complicated by hypotheses of "sources," and the question of interpolation. The question of sources, however, does not help us at present to an any more satisfactory solution of the problem; there may, indeed, be interpolations, "but if it is proposed to eliminate every difficult passage as having been interpolated, very little indeed of the Gospel will be left at the end of the process."

With regard to the whole question of Fourth Gospel criticism Professor Schmiedel says that



there is only "positive relief from an intolerable burden," when "the student has made up his mind to give up any such theory as that of the 'genuineness' of the Gospel, as also of its authenticity in the sense of its being the work of an eye-witness who meant to record actual history. Whoever shrinks from the surrender, can, in spite of all the veneration for the book which constrains him to take this course, have little joy in his choice. Instead of being able to profit by the elucidation regarding the nature and the history of Jesus, promised him by the 'genuineness' theory, he finds himself at every turn laid under the necessity of meeting objections on the score of historicity; and if he has laboriously succeeded (as he thinks) in silencing these, others and yet others arise tenfold increased, and in his refutation of these, even when he carries it through—and that, too, even, it may be, with a tone of great assurance—he yet cannot in conscientious self-examination feel any true confidence in his work."

It only remains to add that, in our opinion, the same remarks with slight modification might be made with regard to by far the greater part of the Synoptical writings as well.

But that such a poor answer as the one we are led to deduce from the general point of view of advanced criticism will satisfy the

question, "What think ye of Christ?"—is and must be highly repugnant to those who not only love but also worship Him. What, then, are the grounds for this intuition of greater things, which refuses to sacrifice itself on the altar of "science"? Two of our succeeding chapters will be devoted to a general consideration of this question; but before doing so it will be well to attempt a summary of what has gone before and add to it some further information which has just come to light.

## SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE FROM ALL SOURCES.

IN what has preceded, the general reader who is not familiar with the intricacies of the subject may have gleaned only a blurred impression of the main points at issue. It will therefore be of service to recapitulate a little, and to set forth the writer's own view—what, in his opinion, is the judgment most in keeping with the general facts of criticism.

In the first place, too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of textual criticism. We have seen that we do not know the original writing of the autographs of our four documents ; whatever it may have been, it certainly differed widely from our present “received text,” and therefore arguments based on this text, or even on Westcott and Hort's “neutral text,” must be always received with caution. A knowledge of the original text might entirely invalidate such arguments, and raise a host of new problems.

In the second place, we should keep clearly in mind that our investigations as to date and authorship are solely with regard to these autographs; when the question of date and authorship is raised, it is solely in regard to the original forms of our present Mt., Mk., Lk. and Jn. There is here no question as to the date or authorship of their sources.

In this connection it may be pointed out with regard to the principal Synoptical source, that if Dr. Abbott's contention (that this document was originally written in Hebrew) is correct, we have, for this source at any rate, a distinct stage between the original Aramaic Sayings-material and the Greek of our Synoptics. Hebrew was the classical scriptural language of the Jews, and it had to be translated and interpreted in the synagogues for the benefit of the unlearned. The writer of this Hebrew document, then, must have been a learned man, and not an illiterate, as the original disciples are represented to have been in canonical scripture. The only one of the traditional apostles who may possibly be supposed to have been capable of writing classical Hebrew is the "publican" Matthew; but one who was a "tax-gatherer," and therefore who belonged to the lowest and most despised class, can hardly be supposed to have had a rabbinical training. If this conten-

tion of Dr. Abbott's is correct, we see in it the means of widely extending the opinion of Professor Nestle that the Sayings and Parables (perhaps even some of the narratives also) were set down in the autographs of our Gospels in a far more graphic fashion than in our present text. Already in one source they had most probably been transformed from the graphic Aramaic original into the classical Biblical style, and perhaps also in other sources; there are therefore two stages of transformation to be taken into account.

From this it follows that, even if we could get back to the original writing of the autographs, we should still be a stage, and in some cases two stages, removed from the actual Sayings. But behind the autographs lie sources not only for the Sayings, but also for the Acts; and not only for these but also for the legends. The Synoptists were compilers and editors; they probably added nothing of themselves. But they were not editors as we are editors in this unemotional age; they wrote with immense enthusiasm and deep conviction, and I for my part can well conceive they were helped in their efforts.

With the Fourth Gospel it is otherwise. Here the question of written sources is not so definitely established; the writer uses far more freedom,

his sources (other than those which also lay before the Synoptics) are remembrances of another line of tradition; he writes down all as he thinks it must have been, with far greater love and much greater beauty of expression. The Synoptists seem persuaded that they are writing pure physical history. Jn. seems inspired to pour forth the scenes of a mystic drama; tradition must give way before the overpowering emotion of the present inner light. Read the oldest collection of the sermons of Hermes the Thrice-Greatest, and there you will find in fullness the Light and Life doctrine which filled the imagination of the writer of the Fourth Gospel. And if you say it is copied from our Gospel, study the whole question of these early communities, and then perhaps you may be able to believe that there need have been no copying among the mystics, though there may have been an identity of source.

But to return to the historical problem. When and by whom were our four Gospels written? and further, where were they composed? It is evident that from the documents themselves we can get no very direct information on any of these points.

First, as to date, there is the strong presumption from internal evidence that they were all four written after at least 70 A.D.; moreover,



the elaborate work done on the borrowing-hypothesis, as we have seen, points steadily to the fact that the Synoptic writers were contemporaries. Was the writer of the Fourth Gospel also a contemporary? Judging by the "drastic freedom" with which he has treated the same materials as the Synoptists, he could not have regarded their expositions as authoritative. In every probability this is because he knew who they were, even if he did not know them personally.

When we review the external evidences as to date and are confronted with the ceaseless battle concerning them, one thing only seems certain, namely, that there is no unassailable fact to guide us. If there were one single proved fact, there would be no controversy. Taking, then, all things into consideration, remembering that the Tübingen school fifty years ago argued with great acumen for as late as about 170 A.D., and not forgetting that latterly several distinguished scholars have given their suffrages to dates within the first century, we are of opinion that the time which most conveniently suits all the phenomena is the period of Hadrian, 117-138 A.D.

The new-found statement that the story of the Magi was a Persian legend translated into Greek in 119 A.D. suits our date admirably. We can, of course, reject this statement as utterly apocryphal, though why a so damaging piece of

evidence for traditional views should be invented in orthodox circles is hard to understand ; or we can accept it and try to save tradition by supposing that chap. ii. of Mt. is a later addition, and that original Mt. began, as did Mk., with the ministry of the Baptist ; or we can accept it, holding to the unity of Mt.'s introduction, and draw the logical deduction from the premisses.

Next as to authorship. By whom were our documents written ? To this criticism can as yet give no positive answer. The traditional names of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John must be rejected if they are taken as referring to the traditional apostles Matthew and John, and the traditional followers of Peter and Paul, Mark and Luke. But all four names were common enough, and it may be possible that a Matthew, a Mark, a Luke or a John may have been actually the scribes of the famous documents under discussion. Can we, however, derive any further information from internal evidence as to their nationality ? Were they Jews of Palestine or Jews of the Dispersion, or Gentiles ? If our date holds good it may safely be said that in all probability they could not have been Jews of Palestine. The writers of Mt. and Mk. may very probably have been Jews of the Dispersion, the writers of Lk. and Jn. may also have been Jews of the Diaspora, but more probably they were Gentiles.

As to how these writings were composed, it may be conjectured that the common phenomena of the Synoptic documents point rather to concerted effort than to individual attempts of a casual nature. It is more difficult to believe that three separate attempts were made by three writers unacquainted with each other, in three different countries, than that there was some common understanding. Such a coincidence, on the former supposition, would be very extraordinary. It may, then, be permissible to conjecture that a common effort was made by several to produce a single Gospel for general circulation, and that it was found impossible to decide on which had the better claim to be the most suitable. This attempt was based mainly on a document that appeared to all three writers to provide the most suitable main outline. If this document was written in Hebrew, as is not improbable, they would have to translate it each in his own fashion, or there was a translation and each corrected it in his own way by the original. This would mean that the writers knew both Greek and Hebrew and were therefore not unlearned.

For the genesis of the Fourth Gospel we are strongly inclined to take the Muratorian account as containing some germ of history. The writer was "of the disciples"—that is to say, one who

had direct inspiration, who was still directly taught from within by vision. He was a practical mystic, and had doubtless been trained in those mystic circles whose nomenclature he uses.

Can we, however, venture to say where these documents were written? Twelve months ago the matter would have been purely conjectural, except with regard to Jn., to which many from internal evidence have assigned an Alexandrian, or at any rate an Egyptian origin. We are, however, now in possession of a translation of the very valuable Demotic papyrus purchased at Aswān in 1895 by the Trustees of the British Museum. (See *Stories of the High Priest of Memphis: The Sethon of Herodotus and the Demotic Tales of Khamuas*. By F. Ll. Griffith, M.A., Oxford. Clarendon Press: 1900.) The papyrus is to be dated, in all probability, somewhere about 75 A.D., and is a copy from an older MS.

This papyrus contains a strange story, some of the details of which are paralleled by incidents in the Gospel narratives. Our story belongs to the tales of the Khamuas-cycle, the first of which was made known to us by the labours of Brugsch in 1865-67. Khamuas was in every probability the most notable of the sons of Rameses II.; he was high priest of Ptah at Memphis, and

head of the hierarchy of the time (about 1250 B.C.). But above all he was famed for his wisdom and mighty powers of magic, and became the hero of innumerable folk-tales.

Our new story opens with the miraculous birth of the son of Setme Khamuas and his wife. Before his conception the mother is told in a dream to eat of the seeds of a certain plant, and at the same time it is revealed to Setme that "the child that shall be born shall be named Si-Osiri [Son of Osiris, *i.e.*, Son of God]; and many are the marvels which he shall do in the land of Egypt."

And the child grew marvellously in stature. "It came to pass that when the child Si-Osiri was in his first year, one would have said that 'he is two years old,' and when he was in his second year, one would have said, 'he is three years old.'" And his parents loved him exceedingly.

"The child grew big, he grew strong, he was sent to school. . . . He rivalled the scribe that had been appointed to teach him. The child began to speak . . . with the scribes of the House of Life in the Temple of Ptah; all who heard him were lost in wonder at him."

Now on a certain day Setme looked out from his house and saw the corpse of a rich man being carried out for burial in great pomp; he also

saw the body of a poor man being carried to the cemetery wrapped in a mat. And he was thinking how much better it would be in the other world for one who was honoured with so much mourning, than for the poor man who had none to bewail him. And Si-Osiri said to him: "There shall be done unto thee in Amenti like that which shall be done unto this poor man."

Hereupon he took his father with him to Amenti (the invisible world), and showed him its seven halls and what was done there to men after death, and said to him: "My father Setme, dost thou not see this great man clothed in raiment of royal linen, standing near to the place in which Osiris is? He is that poor man whom thou sawest being carried out from Memphis, with no man following him, and wrapped in a mat. He was brought to the Tē and his evil deeds were weighed against his good deeds that he did upon earth: and it was found that his good deeds were more numerous than his evil deeds, considering the life destiny which Thoth had written for him . . . considering his magnanimity upon earth. And it was commanded before Osiris that the burial outfit of that rich man, whom thou sawest carried forth from Memphis with great laudation, should be given to this same poor man, and that he should be taken among the noble spirits as a man of



God that follows Sokaris Osiris, his place being near to the person of Osiris. But the great man whom thou didst see, he was taken to the Tē : his evil deeds were weighed against his good deeds, and his evil deeds were found more numerous than his good deeds that he did upon the earth. It was commanded that he should be requited in Amenti, and he is that man whom thou didst see . . . and whose mouth was open in great lamentation."

After this incident we are again told : "Now when the boy Si-Osiri had attained twelve years it came to pass that there was no good scribe or learned man that rivalled him in Memphis in reading writing that compels." And thereupon follows a long recital of a curious battle of magic between Si-Osiri and a wizard of Ethiopia.

In the above passages it is hardly necessary to draw the attention of the reader to the striking parallels between the incidents here related and those in the Gospel stories. As the reviewer in *The Times* (Jan. 8, 1901), says : "The birth of the child, the revelation of his name and future greatness to the father in a dream (Mt. i. 20, 21), his rapid growth in wisdom and stature (Lk. ii. 40), and in questioning the doctors in the temple (Lk. ii. 46, 47), are all in correspondence." The far more striking parallel, however, is between the tale of the rich and poor man and the

Gospel story of Dives and Lazarus (Lk. xvi. 19-31). The going to school and rivalling the scribe appointed to teach him is also paralleled in the Gospel of the Infancy and elsewhere.

Now, as we have seen, the Mt. and Lk. documents were composed, in the highest probability, somewhere in the reign of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), and the parallels are found in those parts of these documents which are independent either of the common material used by these writers and Mk. (the Triple Tradition), or the second source used by them but not by Mk. (the Double Tradition). Here, then, we seem to be on the track of yet another "double tradition."

For our papyrus is to be dated in all probability about 75 A.D.; moreover, it is the copy of an older document. Its autograph form, then, must be dated still earlier, while as for its contents they may mount to a high antiquity for anything we know to the contrary. These contents are part and parcel of the most favourite cycle of folk-tales in ancient Egypt, and were presumably in everybody's mouth. It is not likely that *new* tales of so famous a person as Setme Khamuas could be easily circulated without comment. Again, if we take the tale of the rich man and poor man in Amenti, it has all the appearance of being original. It is far more detailed than the Dives and Lazarus story in Lk., and contains

a far more ample description of the other world.

Of course every effort will be made by apologists of the traditional view to break down this new piece of evidence ; we cannot but think, however, that as the matter stands at present the probabilities are all in favour of the priority of the Setme Khamuas account.

If this be so, we are now in a position to answer the question, Where were our Gospels written?—with far greater precision than would otherwise be possible. It is now highly probable that the writers of Mt. and Lk. composed their documents in Egypt ; and if in Egypt, most probably at Alexandria. Jn., as we have already seen, most probably arose in the same environment, and Mk. alone remains to be speculated upon. If, as we conjecture, the three Synoptics were the outcome of some concerted effort, and Mt. and Lk. are traced with great probability to Egypt, Mk. also must be placed in the same region.

We thus conclude that the autographs of our four Gospels were most probably written in Egypt, in the reign of Hadrian.

## THE LIFE-SIDE OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN things religious, as we have seen, the only field of research with which at present official science is competent to deal is bounded by her own presumed limits of the possibilities of happening on the plane of this outer physical world. Within these limits she is, for the most part, on safe ground, and especially is this the case when dealing with the literary criticism of documents and estimating the general historicity of the statements of their writers. But this boundary of science is marked out for her by the self-limitations of her officials and not by nature, for they ignore, when they do not reject with contempt, the possibility of a mass of abnormal *objective* phenomena studied by investigators of so-called "spiritualism" and "occultism"—for instance, all that large class of phenomena belonging to what is called "exteriorisation" or "materialisation," where there is no question of subjectivity, or vision, or clear-seeing (which

fewer and fewer as time goes on are prepared to deny), but simply added possibilities of happening in the outer physical world. Allowing for even 99 per cent. of fraud and self-deception, there still remains enough of evidence to put a universal negative out of court.

Here it is evident that with the official recognition of the possibility of such purely physical phenomena, the area of presumable historicity of writers who deal with such subjects would be considerably widened; and this is especially the case with the writers of the Gospel documents and of their sources. In this it is evident that the present standpoint of the critic is in all cases defined by his personal experience, or, rather, limited by his lack of experience; for once he has had definite experience of any of such phenomena, purely objective though abnormal, he will never be able to deny their possibility, and he will feel himself bound to allow for it in judging the question of historicity of the statements of the evangelists and all other writers of this class; in brief, he can no longer deny *a priori* the possibility of so-called "miracles."

At the same time it does not follow that because he admits this possibility, he therefore accepts such statements without further investigation. On the contrary, he knows that it is just such abnormal happenings which are most

liable to exaggeration, and that though he is bound to admit the *possibility*, he has most carefully to consider the *probability* of such a statement being an accurate description of the occurrence.

For instance, we are told that the Christ appeared to His disciples walking on the lake, and are told, with pleasing *naïveté*, of the ill-success of one of them who attempted to leave the boat and go to Him. Of a disciple of the Buddha also a precisely similar story is related; nay, further, if our memory does not deceive us, of the Buddha it is further recorded that he not only walked across a river, but that he took with him ten thousand of his Bhikshus. By those who believe in the possibility of such a happening at all, it will be at once conceded that in this instance what is recorded of the Christ in the former case is ten thousand times more probable than what is recorded of the Buddha in the latter. Indeed, this particular Buddhist legend may be safely classed as an instance of historicised metaphor, for it is easier to conceive of the myth as having its origin in a belief in the attainment of Arhatship by this number of the Buddha's disciples—"the crossing over the river" of birth and death, and reaching the "further shore" or the Nirvānic state of enlightenment—than to think it due entirely to the



unaided but gorgeous exaggeration of the Oriental imagination. In fact, in this instance, the Buddhist sculptures themselves have fortunately preserved for us the original form of the marvel. The Buddha and his disciples come to a river in flood, and the Master uses the opportunity to expound the difficulty of crossing the turbulent stream of Samsāra or re-birth. Such is the simple form of the original incident.

Of course it may be that some allegorical meaning may also be found in the statement concerning the Christ; but at the same time it is not only possible but very probable that He was "*seen of them*" on many occasions. Whether, in this instance, it was a collective, subjective seeing, or they saw Him with their physical eyes, His subtle body being made temporarily objective to them, matters little. There, however, remains the further question: But may it not have been His actual physical body? This of course must depend, in its possibilities and probabilities, upon the further belief that such a physical happening can actually take place. In little things the phenomena of levitation create a presumption that so great a Master of nature could, had He wished, have done greater things. But the further question would still arise: Would He have thought it necessary to do so great a thing when a less would have amply sufficed? And to

this question the most probable answer is, No.

In this direction, then, as it seems to us, future science may very probably, at no distant date, enlarge her hypotheses of possibility, and in such matters judge more leniently in some respects the historicity of the Gospel-writers; but in other ordinary objective matters the scientific critic is compelled to persist in his present attitude. The historical critic has no other concern than to ascertain what took place down here, or rather what is the most probable account of what took place externally down here, as far as can be gleaned from the contradictory, confused, and exaggerated statements of the records.

In this, unfortunately, we can get no help from any independent historian of the period; we are dependent entirely on writers who not only loved but who worshipped the Master. So far are they from being historians in the modern sense of the term, that they were born and bred in a literary atmosphere and the heirs of literary methods which are demonstrated on all hands to be the very antipodes to our modern sense of history. It is, however, absolutely impossible for anyone fully to realise this state of affairs until he has familiarised himself with the criticism of the Jewish apocalyptic, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphic.

raphic literature of the times. When, moreover, we find a rev. writer going so far as to call his treatment of this subject Books which influenced our Lord and His Disciples, it is plain that there is good evidence that such books strongly influenced early Christian writers, and that such methods of literary composition were directly and naturally inherited by the scribes of the new religion.

On the other hand, we have to reckon with the fact that, in spite of this unhistorical literature (for we deny that it was precisely because of this, as some claim), Christianity grew and prospered, and has eventually taken its place not only as one of the great world-religions, but as the present religion of the most active and vigorous nations of the earth. In our opinion, it is very evident that a satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon can never be arrived at by the mere dissection of externals; we can no more account for the life, growth, and persistence of Christianity by an analysis of outer phenomena, then we can find the soul of a man by dissecting his body, or discover the secret of genius simply by a survey of its environment and heredity. To all these things there is also an inner side. And it is just the inner side of the origins of Christianity which has been so much neglected by those who have so far approached

them from the present limited view-point of scientific enquiry. The life-side of things is at present beyond its ken.

It is because of the stupendous power of this life-side, more than for any other reason, that the results of scientific biblical research, especially in the domain of the Gospel writings, have been and are so strenuously resisted by the mass of believers in the ever-present power of the Christ; they feel that the religion which has given them such comfort, cannot have its source in the mediocre elements left them after such a drastic analysis of what they consider to be their most authoritative documents.

Many of them have in themselves felt in some fashion the power of the life of their faith in emotions or subjective experiences, and the conviction of its truth brought about by such feelings and experiences leads them to resent the progress of criticism, and to deny the validity of the methods which seem to aim at depriving them of their security in this conviction.

This regrettable opposition to free enquiry into the objective truth of certain selected records is owing to their natural clinging to forms instead of centring themselves in the life. They are not yet convinced of the incontrovertible truth—the fundamental law of evolution—that forms must change. It is an amazing fact that not only the

mass of believers, but also to a large extent the majority of the critics themselves (in spite of their free enquiry into the documents), are still under the influence of a traditional orthodoxy of doctrinal form. No matter how freely critics may treat the documents, they seem still persuaded that the genuine teaching of the Christ is to be deduced from these selected documents alone ; while as for the mass of believers they are horror-struck at the suggestion that the very selection of these documents involves the begging of the whole question. It is, they think, because they have not only believed with all their hearts in these writings, but have vehemently rejected all others as heretical and mischievous, that they or their fellows have experienced the life of their religion.

Now all this is, in the writer's opinion, a most grievous misunderstanding of the universal love of the Christ, and founded on the error that He is a respecter not only of persons, but of the limitations which they establish ; and these, not only for themselves, but, more strangely still, for Him. They do not yet know that a true Master of religion demands nothing but love of truth and a sincere endeavour to live rightly ; He is ready to help all, even those who may deny any particular form He may have used on earth ; much more then to help those who seek

to clear away from that form the misconceptions which His professed orthodox followers have woven round it, in a too great love of the form instead of a love of the Truth whose servant He is.

Now, there must ever be a great mystery connected with the work of such a Master—a great mystery, we say, for it would be foolish to avoid the use of the word, merely because it is out of fashion in the passing phase of arrogance of some who would measure all things by their own limited experience. We are surrounded by mysteries on all sides at every moment of our lives, and the mystery of the Christ is the mystery which, in its hypothesis, none but the perfected man can fully know.

His unity, “which hath many faces,” is not to be seen in greater fullness by shutting our eyes to all but an arbitrarily selected number of documents, and declaring that the rest contain mere counterfeit presentments of His presence. If the manifold literature of the early centuries teaches us anything, it is the truth of the ancient saying, “He hath faces on all sides, on all sides ears and eyes.” And, strangely enough, it is just in the arbitrarily excluded literature that we find most distinct traces of an effort to understand this spiritual side of His nature, and of unequivocal statements of the



nature of His appearances and continued help after the death of His body.

In much of it we are put in direct contact with the inner circles of those devoted to the spiritual life, who gave themselves up to contemplation and the developing of those inner faculties of the soul, whereby they might experience the life-side of things in moments of ecstasy, or visions of the night. These men were poets, and prophets, philosophers of religion, allegorists, mystical writers, for whom external history was of very minor importance. They were in contact with the inner side of things in many of its multitudinous phases ; contact with this life gave them the feeling of certainty, and the truth of ideas became for them so vastly greater than the truth of physical facts, that they failed to discriminate in the way we now call upon men to discriminate in such matters. What they saw or experienced in the inner spaces was for them the truth, and things "down here" had to be made to fit in with things "up there"; if the prosaic facts of history did not fit the "revealed" truth, so much the worse for the facts. Not, however, that they definitely so argued to themselves; for we do not believe that the phenomena can be explained by the crude and impatient hypothesis of a widespread conspiracy of de-

liberate falsification. They wrote looking at the things from within, where time and space are not as here, and in so doing, sometimes picked out scraps of outer history that might correspond to the inner happenings, but so transforming them and confusing the order and transposing the details, that no one could possibly disentangle it from outside, while the many believed without further question because of the piety and known or felt illumination of the writers.

This, no doubt, seems very reprehensible to minds trained in the exact observation of physical affairs; but from a more extended point of view, it may be doubted whether such a method is in *reality* any farther from the actual truth of things than that of those who would measure the possibilities of the inner world by the meagre standard of outward things alone, and who deny the validity of all inner experience other than the dim subjective imaginings of the normal brain. We are, however, not defending the shortcomings of the mystic, but are only pleading for an unbiassed investigation of *all* the factors which enter into the problem of the origins of Christianity and its subsequent evolution. The truth can never be arrived at by consistently neglecting the most powerful factors in the whole investigation, or,

on the other hand, by assuming that these factors are to be classed solely as the outcome of mere hallucination, pious self-deception, ignorant superstition, or diseased imagination.

On the other hand, we do not deny that hallucination and the rest are to be duly allowed for in our investigations, for they are part and parcel of human nature ; but we protest against the narrow-mindedness and egregious self-conceit of those extremists who presume to class the experiences of religion among the phenomena of criminological psychology.

As we have welcomed the light which scientific research can throw on the outer problems, so we still more warmly will welcome the application of the same method of accurate research into the subtler field of the inner nature of things. But here we are face to face with a different order of facts, or rather of facts of a nature far other than physical happenings ; it further goes without saying that a scientist of these inner things must have some personal acquaintance with them, for the only instrument he can work with is *himself*.

On the other hand, there are many who have some acquaintance with the soul of things, but who have not the slightest notion of applying an accurate method of analysis to their experiences, or of checking them by the experiences of

others ; least of all, of submitting themselves to any mental discipline, or devoting themselves to study. They consider their inner experiences sacrosanct, and refuse to mix them with earthly affairs, or submit them to the test of reason. They think that because the experience is from "*within*," it necessarily is "*higher*" than things down here. They regard themselves as privileged recipients of spiritual truth ; many hold themselves apart as blessed beyond their fellows, and some are so persuaded of their special "election" that they proceed to start some new sect of religion. They seem to think there is something new in all this, instead of it being as old as the world. They have, it is true, brought through to their physical brain some experience of their soul ; but they do not remember that the mind also has to play its part. For the Mind of the universe is the Logos of God. It is the Light ; while the life is the Soul of things, the spouse of the Light. The soul supplies the experience, the Mind orders it in harmony with the Wisdom which is its counterpart.

Therefore is it that writings based on the utterances of seers and prophets, or composed by them, should be submitted to the most searching light of the reason ; and not only so, but the seer himself should more than all others use his reason. In saying this we do not beg the

question of the superiority of the mind to the soul; for it seems more reasonable to suppose that these are co-partners, or rather two aspects of one and the same thing—the reflection of the “Great Man” in the “little man” down here. Reason alone seems unable to add to our experience; we must seek our experience in life. When our reason finds itself at the end of its resources, some new experience may give it new material upon which to work; but when it has the new material presented to it, it is bound by the laws of its being to bring this into harmony with the rest of its cosmos, for if it refuses to do so, chaos is only increased the more for it.

It is just on the one hand this refusal of the modern reason to attempt to order the materials supplied by mystic experience, and on the other the rejection of reason by emotion, which leave the problem of the origins of Christianity in a so chaotic state.

Mysticism in all its phases is officially taboo. That way, official science thinks, madness alone must lie, and hates to hear the name; it hates because it fears this contact with the life within; but such timidity is foolish fear, for once in life's embraces it would grow to its full stature, instead of staying in its present childish state of psychic ignorance.

Again, the true freedom of the life of the spirit

is manifestly unrealisable by any who limit the activity of their reason by the self-imposed bonds of formal dogma. For is it not self-evident that no form can fully manifest this life, not even the most subtle creation of the most lofty intelligence known to man; how much less the imperfect attempts of those who were more often engaged in polemical controversy than in striving for freedom?

Now Christianity can only be cut apart from its sister-faiths by those who shut themselves in their own theological prisons, and then claim that they are palaces large enough to contain the universe. The philosophic mind which cannot thus imprison its ideas in water-tight cells, on the other hand, is compelled to admit similar phenomena in all great religions. A study of these religions and their history enables it to recognise similar elements in Christianity; for a really independent mind absolutely refuses to have certain particularistic views selected for it, and labelled as Christian, when it finds that the early history of the religion records the existence of many other views which bring it into contact with the general thought of all great religious efforts.

But what is of more importance is, that one who has not only a philosophical mind, but also some appreciation of the inner nature of religion, can



sense behind these sister-faiths the working of some great plan for the helping of the common family of mankind. In all this apparent chaos there seems to be here and there manifested, especially in the innermost circles of the adherents of the greatest world-faiths, some intuition of an inner cosmos or order—an economy in which the Teacher plays a prominent part.

On the other hand, those who seem to have been most devoted to the personalities of the great Masters, are often found to claim that the working out of the plan is to be by means of their particular religion alone. This widespread persuasion in the minds of many disciples of the greatest religious Teachers is very remarkable, when we should rather have expected that a great Master of religion would have strongly impressed upon them the prime necessity of recognising the utility of other forms of religion for other times and races, and not have apparently preached that one mode only was sufficient for all men. Of course there are exceptions to this rule, but the exceptions are to be found only among the philosophers of religion, who apply the full force of their reason to a consideration of the problem.

The reason for this we believe to be in a misunderstanding of the office of the Teacher, and of the standpoint from which He speaks. He is a

servant of the great economy, and speaks in its name and in the name of Him who directs the whole ordering. A Christ, or a Buddha, is one who has attained to perfect manhood, and has authority given Him to speak in the name of the Lord of the world. Looked at from below, and by the eyes of those who can see the Teacher only as He appears to them and not in His real nature, He is taken to be not only the representative of the Law, but also that Law itself, and the Lord of it. Through Him they have been brought into contact with the Truth, and rightly owe Him all their gratitude, and love, and reverence. But why because of this should they deny the right of others to show the same reverence, love and gratitude to another of like nature, who in His turn has brought the knowledge of the Way to the souls of their fellows?

Within the life of the world, we are told, there are degrees of consciousness where the exclusive nature of the individual self begins to yield to a higher phase of individuality; nothing is lost but much is gained, for in this way the "gate of heaven" swings open for a man, and he begins to perceive the still higher possibilities of the power of a Master of Wisdom who has entered into the "Fullness." Some dim idea of the nature of those who have not yet attained

such lofty heights as those of perfect masterhood, but who have won their way to one of the intermediate summits of the Holy Mountain, may be gleaned from the following words of the philosopher-mystic Plotinus (Enn. v. 8, 4):

“They see themselves in others. For all things are transparent, and there is nothing dark or resisting, but everyone is manifest to everyone internally and all things are manifest; for light is manifest to light. For everyone has all things in himself and again sees in another all things, so that all things are everywhere, and all is all and each in all, and infinite the glory. For each of them is great, since the small also is great. And the sun there is all the stars [? planets], and again each and all are the sun. In each, one thing is pre-eminent above the rest, but it also shows forth all.”

What wonder, then, that anyone coming into contact with the influence of one whose consciousness embraced not only such possibilities, but even far higher (as we hold that of the Christ did and does), should have been so overwhelmed as to imagine that that consciousness was the end of all ends, and the source of all sources? Moreover, when the Master, from within and with the authority of His office, declared, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” we can easily recognise the inner truth of the declaration

while perceiving how grievously the words could be misunderstood, if they were taken to apply to any individual man on earth. Equally so when Kṛiṣṇa declares, in the teaching preserved in the Bhagavad Gîtâ, that whatever religious path men follow they all come to Him—we must take this not as applying to the mortal man, or even to the immortal Master, but to the One with whose authority the Master was clothed to carry out the plan of the Divine Economy.

We do not in this presume to do anything else than indicate in the crudest fashion some elements of the inner life, which must be taken into consideration in this great problem of the mystery of the Christ and the evolution of Christianity; but without a consideration of this life-side there is, in the writer's opinion, no solution of the problem.

## THE GOSPEL OF THE LIVING CHRIST.

THE idea of the intelligent ordering of the inner life of general religion (without distinction of sects) by the Servants of the Divine Economy, is a conception which as yet is very little understood. To admit that all the great world-faiths owe their inner genesis to the carrying out of some great plan, and that their inner life is watched over and tended by Those who have in charge the husbandry of spiritual things, is possible only for one who endeavours to look round upon the whole religious world with equal eye.

It is very difficult for the adherent of one particular faith, or the devotee of one particular teacher, to embrace so wide a prospect, for in order to do so he has to change the focus of his gaze, and look beyond the present area which occupies his whole attention. To use a different mode of expression, and employ the language of meditation—so far he has been “one-pointed,”

with all his thought concentrated on his own particular faith-form or on the form of the teacher who is the object of his love and worship.

But, as we are told, there is a higher state than that of concentration on an object. When the power of concentration on an object has been mastered, the mind is ready for the practice of contemplation. The concentrated mind is no longer centred on a special form or object, but left in its own-form, unmodified by outer forms, attentive only to the reception of the spiritual ideas from within, and the limitless illumination of Him to whom it aspires by its love of the Good and Beautiful and True.

When this state of contemplation has once been realised, no longer can any special form be singled out as containing the whole truth of the inner life; on the contrary, the idea of a true catholicity is brought to birth, and it is possible to understand that forms even of apparently the greatest diversity are all in their several fashions partial representations of the living ideas behind them.

It is, however, not to be expected that the human mind can easily assent to the abandonment of forms to which it has been accustomed for centuries, and by concentration upon which it has experienced the intensity of many a fine enthusiasm. It can only by degrees learn the



nature of the grander enthusiasm for the Life within and the guiding wisdom of the Light from which the formless ideas are radiated—ideas formless in so far only that no form of human conception can contain them.

It is presumably the great difficulty of attaining to these wider views without falling into a state of pure indifference or merely contemptuous tolerance, which renders them distasteful to the religious enthusiast. He feels that what is most necessary in religion is a lifting force—something to uplift *him*; and because he finds that his belief in a certain form gives him the feeling of assurance, he imagines that this form will be equally efficacious for the rest of the world. He has not yet learnt the true secret of the power of the World-helpers—Their willingness to help all men in the way most suited to *their* existing beliefs and their present state of development. In spiritual things as in more mundane matters, to help a man (otherwise than by simply ministering to his material needs) we must speak his language and not address him in a foreign tongue. So is it that the spiritual helper does not impose some other form upon the devotee, but vivifies the highest form the devotee himself can think or feel. Even when a pupil is directly taught, he often still persists in thinking that the new form he has conceived is given and

consecrated by his Master, whereas, in reality, it is his own limitation of his Master's power.

How long, then, will it be before the religious enthusiast will learn that the consummation devoutly to be wished is not the compression of all human souls into his own particular theological mould—a pitilessly mechanical process which would only result in the indefinite multiplication of the religionist's own self-limitations! The purpose of life is to live and develop, and the ways of growth are not only as numerous as the souls of men, but each soul can evolve in an infinite number of forms. It follows, then, if we are enthusiasts for the wider life of religion, and are striving to gain a deeper understanding of the possibilities of our common human nature, that so far from falling into the error of being intolerant of the forms of the various religions, we should recognise that all serve their purpose each in its own way.

If a man finds greater comfort in one form than in another, it is surely because it is more suited to him for the time being. He will as surely grow out of it naturally as he evolves; but until he discovers for himself its limitations, it is unwise to try violently to uproot the form, lest haply the life should perish with its vehicle. It is not thus, we are told, wise husbandmen treat the man-plant.

The problem, however, which has now to be faced in the Western world, is that the mind of Christendom, by its own natural growth, is fast outwearing the forms in which it has been encased since the official establishment of the so-called Catholic Church. It is being gradually recognised by the most enlightened minds among both clergy and laity that the old forms are being rapidly outgrown, and that already many of the official dogmas of the Churches are found to be a burden which the fast-developing intellect of the present day can no longer tolerate, and this not only because of the extended knowledge of the laws underlying natural phenomena and the processes of thought, but also because of the conviction that the law of evolution should hold good in every department of life, and can only be banished from the domain of religion to its lasting detriment.

Already efforts are being made to expand the meaning of many of the dogmas of the Christian Faith; in other words, the life is bursting through the forms. New interpretations of old formulæ are being sought; new definitions are being attempted. The time, however, is still far from ripe for a re-formulation of the dogmas of Christianity which would be acceptable to all the Churches of Christendom. Nor, in our opinion, is this to be regretted;

indeed in the present state of affairs, the longer such a re-formulation is delayed, the better will it be for the in-working life.

There is a potent idea which is endeavouring to impress itself upon the undogmatic conscience, and some few are beginning to understand, however dimly, that the future of harmonious growth is conditioned upon the law of unity in diversity; so long as there is a chance of making this idea live among the many, it would be inadvisable to attempt again to bind large masses of religionists in the shackles of new formulæ, which, though less galling to the intellect than the ancient forms, would nevertheless be limitations and boundary-marks of division, in so far that they must in their nature consist of attempts to show how the supposed ultimate principles of Christianity differ from the supposed ultimate principles of other world-faiths.

On the other hand, without forms distinctive religions would cease to exist, and as yet few religionists can do without them. As we have already seen, forms are only hampering when they are outgrown, or nearly outgrown; till then, they are not only helpful, but necessary. The forms of popular religion, again, are not those which are helpful to the most advanced minds of the time, but those which are suited

to the average intelligence of the faith. Forms too subtle for the majority are beyond their understanding, and therefore of little immediate utility for the mass of believers.

As, then, there is a new spirit abroad, a new life stirring, it would be unwise to let it crystallise too rapidly, even though it should shape itself on lines of great intellectual beauty. The longer the formulation of the new life is delayed, the fairer will be the outer garment it will eventually assume, for the religious mind craves something more than a form of purely intellectual beauty.

As we have seen, many of the ancient forms of dogma and tradition are being cast into the critical melting-pot and much of their substance is being lost in the process. The cause of this, as we have endeavoured to point out, is the unskilful test-method of some of our most distinguished biblical alchemists. Too much of the precious metal is lost in the smelting; they must temper their intellectual fire, or they will before long reduce all to a *caput mortuum*.

Is it, we ask, their intention to eliminate entirely the mystical element from religion? Is it, further, really scientific to adopt a purely theological test, and reject a mass of early material which an unscientific past has decreed to be heretical? This brings us to a considera-

tion of that mass of early dogma, tradition and legend which is classed as Gnostic.

We have recently collected together the material in a volume entitled *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, hoping that some few at least might be interested in a subject which is usually considered so foreign to modern methods of thought. It has, therefore, been a pleasant surprise to find that the book has been warmly welcomed by many thinking men and women, who find in it evidence of the existence in Early Christianity of elements which they have learned to appreciate from their study of the other great religions of the world, but for which they had previously searched in vain in General Christianity.

The main purpose of the volume was to give the material and let the earliest philosophers and mystics of Christianity speak for themselves without angry interruption or contemptuous comment. It was, of course, to be expected that any writer who was bold enough to provide conditions in which the "arch-heretics" of Christendom could plead their own case, would meet with no approval from the adherents of "orthodoxy," and it was also certain that purely rationalistic critics would make merry over the ideas of the Gnostics and lament the labour bestowed on a (in their opinion) so unprofitable subject. But the mis-



take made by both these two extremes of belief is the assumption that in some way the writer desires to revive the ancient forms of Gnosticism. We have, however, no desire to put new wine into old bottles, even though the old bottles may have once contained some part of the original vintage of the "True Vine."

We simply say: There is a neglected field of Early Christianity, fragments of a faith forgotten for all these centuries; you who talk of "primitive" Christianity—how do you explain the Gnosis? You who profess to be scientific and impartial investigators of evidence, who refuse to be bound by the uncritical opinions of Church Fathers and the prejudiced decisions of Councils, how do you explain one of the most important factors (if not *the* most important) in the birth and early development of Christian dogmatic theology? For our part, we have endeavoured to show that a full consideration of the factors which go to form the background of early Gnosticism modifies to an extraordinary extent the generally accepted view of the origins of Christianity.

But the question may be asked: What is the good of these Gnostic ideas to us to-day; what is the use of disinterring these relics from the lumber-room of a forgotten past?

There are of course certain minds who, when

they put the question *cui bono*, refuse to be mollified by any answer short of an explanation of the cosmic purpose of things; we ourselves are content with lesser "goods," and reply that as the best of these Gnostics numbered among them the most philosophical and trained minds of Early Christendom, it is good to hear what they had to say about the Christ and to learn the nature of their faith in Him. If we can get a wider view of Early Christianity, we can take a wider view of the present state of affairs. The Gnosis, as we think, gives us this wider view of the faith and liberty of the first centuries.

But, some may say, no doubt a study of the Gnostics is useful from a historical point of view, and we may even take an antiquarian interest in the various elements incorporated into their systems, but what is the good of their strange speculations to us to-day?

To this we reply: The ideas of the Gnosis are not to be judged solely by the forms in which the Gnostics clothed them, any more than the general doctrines of Christianity are to be judged by the dogmatic formulæ in which they have been encased by the Church Fathers and the decrees of the Councils. The forms of the Gnosis which have been preserved, are to-day, we admit, mainly of antiquarian interest, even as are also the dogmatic formularies of General Christianity

for many people. But even so, they are very interesting, for these Gnostic forms are found to preserve elements from the mystery-traditions of antiquity in greater fullness than we find elsewhere.

So far, however, from desiring to revive the ancient *forms* of the Gnosis or of any of the old mystery-traditions, we are strongly convinced that no good can come of any such attempt. It is as retrograde a process as that a human soul on reincarnating should try to revive some ancient personality of his instead of growing a new one. You cannot live again in a corpse; though, they say, you may do a little "black magic" by means of it.

We, therefore, look with little favour on the attempts of some people to found "Gnostic Churches" (as is being attempted in France), and of others who profess to revive the old mystery-forms. We might as well try to revive the form of some ancient civilisation, and so become mere monkeys of our past selves instead of endeavouring to perfect ourselves into some more beautiful semblance of the Divine order and its infinite possibilities. What is desirable is to study the past, not in order to copy without alteration, but in order that we may recover the memory of the lessons of experience it had to teach.

If, then, we find a form of beauty in antiquity,

the effort of an evolving humanity should be to fashion one of still greater beauty; if we find in the past the record of strenuous efforts to draw towards the heart of things, the endeavour of the present lovers of God in man should be still more strenuously to strive towards the inmost depths of the Divine Wisdom.

Now it is the doctrine of the *Living Christ* which is the most powerful incentive to strenuous effort in the life of Christendom to-day. But how few of those who believe that He lives and watches over them, can tolerate the idea that the Buddha lives and watches too, that Kṛiṣṇa, and Zoroaster, and all the great ones who have lived and worked on earth for human good, live on and watch! More difficult still to believe,—that not only does the Christ watch over Christendom, but that He pours out His help and blessing not only on all who love the Father of our common manhood, but also on all who strive for human betterment no matter what their religious belief or disbelief. And not only does the Christ do this, but all His brethren join with Him in the common task. They are not limited by our theological and racial differences. Theirs is the task to gather up the power set free by these differences and to garner it into the Divine treasure-houses to be used as opportunity affords for the common helping of humanity.

This spiritual alchemy whereby the apparently most antagonistic forces are transmuted for the common good, is a marvellous mystery to contemplate. To take a single instance from the past. It is well known that the philosophy of Greece summed itself up in the Later Platonic School and for three centuries strenuously resisted the victorious on-march of General Christianity. It was the last rampart walled round the ancient culture, and the gallant fight of its defenders against overpowering odds forms one of the most interesting pages of our Western records. Many no doubt will say that these men fought against the Christ and their efforts deservedly came to naught. Christianity triumphed and Paganism received its death blow. It was a moral victory for the world ; ethics overcame metaphysics.

But such hasty generalisations will not satisfy the impartial student of history ; for the philosophic life was based on high ethical endeavour, the Later Platonists were confessedly men of high morality. Their failure was owing to their inability to cater for the multitude and to foresee the needs of the new races which were to develop in the Western world.

On the other hand, we can hardly believe that the better interests of Christianity were served by those who fought so furiously against all culture and intellectual development, least of all



can we believe that they were in this the true servants of a Master of Wisdom. At this time the more tolerant elements of Christendom were themselves being fast swamped by popular clamour. They were rapidly sinking out of sight, to remain hidden till a brighter day when the flood should have subsided and the shining of the sun of tolerance should once more enable them to germinate.

But the most interesting phenomenon for the philosophic mind to contemplate in all this hurly-burly, is that on both sides we find men who were trying to live according to their best convictions, who were strenuously fighting for what they considered to be the highest truth, and for what they thought to be the best means for the general good. It is very evident, therefore, that the power that was working in them was the same power ; the difference, the antagonism, was in the forms and opinions, not in the life and ideas. Not only so, but the strenuousness begotten by the conflict developed the individual combatants far more than they would have been developed if left to themselves.

And if the power in them was of the same nature, we can see that the good purpose of the struggle was the deeper self-realisation of those of the combatants who were absolutely honest in their endeavours.



The force that they thus expended was not lost; it was ingathered into the common storehouse, to be used again for their and our continued benefit.

Those who watch over this, who are the Servants of the Divine Economy, were called by some of the Gnostics "Receivers of Light," and blessed is the man who is worthy to do such service.

Do we, then, really think that the Christ would reject the soul of a Plotinus, of a Porphyry, or a Proclus, merely because they rejected the forms which an Irenæus, a Cyril, or a Theodoret claimed as the only forms in which His wisdom could be expressed?

And if this be so, what of our own times? Do we imagine that the Christ looks with less favour on a Darwin, or a Huxley, or a Büchner, than on the modern champions of orthodoxy; or again, on the other hand, that He rejects the mystics of to-day in favour of the "advanced" critics? We think not; He is wise and knows the needs of our general human nature too well to wish that any part of us should starve.

But think of the infinite patience of it all; the unwearied watching that no opportunity should be missed for giving help in any possible way the human mind and heart should require!

Surely we must not have a lower estimate of a

Master of Wisdom than we have of an ordinary noble soul! And who of us would not, if we could, give help to all without distinction of race or creed?

If it were possible that such ideas could permeate the general life of the world, what a marvellously glorious future would lie before us. No longer should we war with one another, but should unite together to overcome the common enemy—ignorance, so that we might enter into the true gnosis of our common nature, and set our feet together upon the lowest rung of the ladder of that expanding self-consciousness which mounts to Deity.

No longer should we be anxious to declare ourselves Christians or Buddhists, Vedāntins or Confucianists, Zoroastrians or Mohammedans, but we should strive to be lovers of truth wherever it is to be found, and candidates for baptism into that Holy Church of all races, climes and ages, that true Communion of Saints, whose members have been aiders and helpers of all religions, philosophies and sciences which the world may have from time to time required.



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